The Pastor as a Theologian

GBTH - 500

Midwest Seminary Of Bible Theology
ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

Knowing in your heart that you are born-again, and followed by a statement of faith are the two prerequisites to studying and getting the most out of your MSBT materials. We at MSBT have developed this material to educate each Believer in the principles of God. Our goal is to provide each Believer with an avenue to enrich their personal lives and bring them closer to God.

Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? If you have not accepted Him as such, you must be aware of what Romans 3:23 tells you.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

How do you go about it? **You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.**

I John 5:13 gives an example in which to base your faith.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

What if you are just not sure? **Romans 10:9-10 gives you the Scriptural mandate for becoming born-again.**

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Take some time to consider this very carefully. Ask Jesus to come into your heart so that you will know the power of His Salvation and make your statement of faith today.

Once you become born-again, it is your responsibility to renew your mind with the Word of God. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that transformation of the mind can only take place in this temporal world by the Word of God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The Apostle Paul, giving instructions to his “son” Timothy states in 2 Timothy 2:15:
Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

What happens if we do these things? Ephesians 4:12-13 gives us the answer to this question.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

By studying the Word of God, you will be equipped for service in the Kingdom of God and you will also be ready to take the position in the Body of Christ to which God has appointed you. You will be able to walk in unity with other Believers and you will be a vessel of honor to God that can rightly divide the word of truth.

If you are not saved and you do not know what to say, consider this simple prayer.

Lord, I know that I have need of a savior. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and the God raised Him from the dead three days later. I ask to be forgiven and for Jesus to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I believe now by faith that God has heard my prayer and I am born-again.

If you have prayed this prayer, you must accept by faith that your sins have been forgiven. It is important that you tell someone of your decision to accept the Lord. Also, it is our recommendation that you should attach yourself to a local church and undergo water baptism.

For those who have prayed this prayer with sincerity of heart, we welcome to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. May the blessings of God overtake you.

May God grant you wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in all of His ways.

MSBT Directors and Staff
THE VISION

As we have been commissioned by the prophet of God, we now set our hand to write the vision of Midwest Seminary of Bible Theology, so that: "He that runs may read it, the vision having been clearly written and made plain" (Habakkuk 2:2).

1) UNITY - To build up the Body of Christ by networking with all churches, as well as with local and international ministries. This networking is to provide experienced leadership ministries to the small, local Church, to encourage unity and fellowship among pastors, church leaders and para-church groups, through active service.

2) GOSPEL - To go with the lifeline of the Gospel, wherein we desire to educate with love, integrity, and without compromise.

3) ONE CROSS FOR ALL - To cross cultural, racial, and denominational lines for unity, fellowship, networking, and progress. To have an open door through M.S.B.T to all of like faith, who desire to join with us in a common goal for the highest good. To proclaim one cross for all cultures, races, denominations, and peoples.

4) GO YE - To go wherever there is a need; to rich or poor, to majorities and minorities, to large and small churches, to free and incarcerated; to go where many fail to go and to meet the needs before us.

5) THE CALLED - To make opportunities available, to those called to minister, to expand their horizons through new associations and experiences. To aid new and/or younger ministers in fulfilling God's call on their lives.

6) EDUCATION - God has charged us with propagating the Gospel through education to whosoever will. This education is offered through certificate programs that teach the basics of Christianity and degree programs for those seeking more in-depth levels in Christian teachings.

7) APPLICATION - To make available to students the opportunity for education, as well as learning practical application, in traditional and non-traditional settings.

8) DREAM A DREAM - To cause all persons with which we associate to catch a vision, to dream yet another dream, and to keep their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith.

9) THE CALL - To encourage each person (all persons) to move out of his/her (their) comfort zone, to be all he/she (they) can be for Christ and to fulfill the call upon their life (lives), to courage each one (them) to pursue his/her (their) purpose, to live up to his/her (their) potential, and to produce the fruit of the Spirit.
"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"

II Timothy 2:15
The Pastor as a Theologian

154 pages of Commentary
7 Homework assignments
7 Quiz assignments
1 Mid Term Exam
1 Final Exam
59 pages of Answer Keys for school sites only (Answer keys are not included in the student’s copy of material.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the Commentary

Do Homework I, which covers pages 8-28 in the Commentary.
Take Quiz 1, which covers Homework I.
Do Homework II, which covers pages 28-45 in the Commentary
Take Quiz 2, which covers Homework II.
Do Homework III, which covers pages 45-67 in the Commentary.
Take Quiz 3, which covers Homework III.
Do Homework IV, which covers pages 67-88 in the Commentary.
Take Quiz 4, which covers Homework IV.
Take Mid Term Exam, which covers Homework I – IV
Do Homework V, which covers pages 88-114 in the Commentary
Take Quiz 5, which covers Homework V.
Do Homework VI, which covers pages 114-130 in the Commentary
Take Quiz 6, which covers Homework VI.
Do Homework VII, which covers pages 130-150 in the Commentary
Take Quiz 7, which covers Homework VII.
Take Final Exam, which covers Homework V- VII.

13 weeks in a Trimester: 11 weeks of teaching and 2 weeks of testing. You will need to cover 14.8 pages per teaching session.

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NOTE: The Instructor is encouraged to add his/her personality to the teaching sessions and to add knowledge to the Commentaries. The Instructor had some latitude if they desire to give some outside homework or essays. Before doing so, please check with the administrator of the school.

ALL TERM PAPERS MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN TO THE INSTRUCTOR BEFORE THE FINAL EXAM. NO GRADES WILL BE GIVEN FOR THE COURSE WITHOUT THE COMPLETION OF THE TERM PAPER.
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I. INTRODUCTION

It may come as a surprise, but every pastor is called to be a theologian. Theology is not just an academic discipline taken during seminary studies, but an ongoing and central part of the pastoral calling. The health of the Church depends upon its pastors functioning as faithful theologians, which is done, first of all by study, and then by their teaching, preaching, defending, and applying the great doctrines of the faith.

The transformation of theology into an academic discipline, connected to the seminary rather than the Church is most lamentable, probably one of the most negative developments of the last several centuries. In the earliest eras of the Church and throughout Church History, the central theologians of the Church were its pastors. This was certainly true during the Great Reformation as well.

From the Patristic era, the discipline and stewardship of theology was associated with names such as Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Augustine. Similarly, the great theologians of the Reformation were mainly pastors, such as John Calvin and Martin Luther. Of course, their responsibilities often ranged beyond those of the average pastor, but they never conceived of the pastoral role without the essential stewardship of theology.

Theology emerged as an academic discipline with the development of the modern university. Theology was indeed included in the three major disciplines taught in the medieval university, but while the medieval synthesis was intact, the university was always seen as being in direct service to the Church and its pastors.

The rise of the modern research university led to the development of theology as merely one academic discipline among others. Eventually this led to the redefinition of theology as “religious studies” and was separated from ecclesiastical control or concern. In most universities, the secularization of the academy separated the academic discipline of theology from any living connection to Christianity.

These developments have caused great harm to the Church, separating ministries from theology, preaching from doctrine, and Christian care from conviction. One result is the “seeker friendly” variety of church that serves up pabulum and self-help instead of the Truths of Scripture. The pastor’s ministry has often been evacuated of serious doctrinal content and many pastors seem to have little realization of the need to sense “church” as being a theological vocation. All this must be reversed, if the Church is to remain true to God’s Word and the Gospel. Without the pastor functioning as a theologian, theology is then left in the hands of those who often have significantly lessened connection or commitment to the local church.

A. The Pastor’s Calling

The pastoral calling is inherently theological. Since the pastor is to be a teacher of the Word of God and the Gospel, his calling cannot be non-theological. When examined from the New Testament standpoint, the idea of the pastorate as a non-
Theological office is inconceivable. This truth is implicit throughout the Scriptures, but we see it most apparently in Paul's letters to Timothy. There, Paul affirms Timothy's role as a theologian and that all of those called to pastor were to share in the same calling. Paul emphatically encouraged Timothy concerning reading, teaching, preaching, and study of Scripture. All of this is essentially theological, as is made clear when Paul commanded Timothy to "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you" (2Ti.1:13-14).

Timothy was to be a teacher of others who would also teach. "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2Ti.2:2). As Paul completed his Second Letter to Timothy, he voiced great concern as he commanded Timothy to preach the Word, specifically instructing him to "...reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2Ti.4:2). His reasoning included the fact that, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2Ti.4:3-4).

Paul was saying that the pastoral theologian must be able to defend the faith, even as he identifies false teachings and brings correction to his flock and to individuals by the Word of God. Guarding the flock of God for the sake of God's truth is as high a theological calling as can be found. Obviously this requires intense and self-conscious theological thinking, study, and consideration. Paul made that abundantly clear by telling Titus, as he defined the duty of the overseers or pastors, as ones who were to hold fast the "...faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Ti.1:9). In this single verse, Paul simultaneously affirms the defense of and polemical (controversial argument, as one against some opinion) facets of the pastor-theologian's calling.

The pastor's calling is deeply, inherently, and inescapably theological. There is no problem the pastor will encounter in counseling that is not specifically theological in character. All major questions in ministry come with deep theological dimensions and the need for careful theological application. The task of leading, feeding, and guiding the congregation is as theological as any vocation can be.

The preaching and teaching of the Word of God is theological through and through. The preacher functions as a steward of the mysteries of God, explaining the deep, profound theological truths to believers. Thus the pastor arms the believer with the knowledge of the truth that they may grow as disciples and meet the challenge of faithfulness in the Christian life.
Evangelism is also a theological calling, for the very act of sharing the Gospel is a theological argument presented with the goal of seeing a sinner come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The pastor must first understand the Gospel and then understand the nature of the evangelist's calling if he would be faithful in it. Each step of the way, the pastor is dealing with issues that are irrefutably theological.

Today's pastors are often pulled in many directions simultaneously, with the damaging result that the theological vocation can be lost amidst the pressing concerns of a ministry that has been conceived as something other than what Paul intended and communicated to Timothy. Too often, there is a managerial revolution which leaves many pastors feeling more like administrators than theologians. Many times they feel they must deal with matters of organizational theory before they have time to turn to the deep truths of God's Word and their application in everyday life.

The rise of therapeutic concerns within the culture, and the advent of "self-help" thinking, means that many pastors and their church members believe that the pastoral calling is best understood as a "helping profession." When seen this way, the pastor appears to be someone who functions in a therapeutic role, leaving theology as more of a problem than a solution. This betrays the pastoral calling as presented in the New Testament. Besides that, it is a rejection of the apostolic teaching and of the biblical admonition concerning the role and responsibilities of the pastor. Today's pastors must reclaim the pastoral calling as inherently theological, placing others in the role of "manager" that they may be effective in their calling. Otherwise, pastors will be nothing more than communicators, counselors, and managers of congregations that have been emptied of the Gospel and of biblical truth.

B. The Pastor's Concentration

The idea of the pastorate as a non-theological office is inconceivable when studied in the light of the New Testament. The pastor's stewardship of the theological task requires a clear sense of pastoral priority, a keen pastoral ear, and careful attention to the theological dimensions of church life and Christian discipleship. This must be foundational to the ministry of the local church, with ministry emerging from a fundamentally theological foundation.

Christians live out their most fundamental beliefs in everyday life. One essential task of the pastor is to feed the congregation, assisting Christians to think theologically, in order to demonstrate discernment and authentic discipleship. This must start with the pastor as he gives attention, study, time, thought and prayer to the theological dimensions of ministry. Ministry that is deeply rooted in the truths of God's Word will be enriched, protected, and focused by a theological vision, as well as viable for strengthening the believer's lifestyle.
The pastor's concentrated attention to the theological task is required if he will be direct and help develop the establishment of faithful preaching, God-honoring worship, and effective evangelism in the local church. Theological vision must be deeply rooted in God's truth and in the truth about God that forms the very basis of Christian theology.

The pastor's concentration is a necessary theological discipline. He must develop the ability to isolate what is most important in terms of theological gravity from less important subjects. We could call this the process of “theological triage”. As anyone who visits a hospital emergency room knows, a triage nurse is usually there to make needed first-stage evaluations of what patients need care the most. Those with gunshot wounds are given priority care over those with a sprained ankle. This makes medical sense, and to misconstrue this sense of priority would amount to medical malpractice.

Similarly, the pastor must learn to discern different levels of theological importance. First-order doctrines are those that are fundamental and essential to the Christian faith. The pastor's theological instincts must be aware of and should seize upon any compromise on doctrines such as: 1) the full deity and humanity of Christ; 2) the doctrine of the Trinity; 3) the doctrine of atonement; 4) justification by faith alone, etc. If such doctrines are compromised, the Christian faith falls. If he hears one say that Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead is not a necessary doctrine, it must be responded to with a theological instinct that understands that such a denial is the same as a rejection of the Gospel itself.

Second-order doctrines are those which are essential to church life and necessary for the ordering of the local church, but do not define the Gospel in themselves. For instance, one might detect an error in a doctrine at this level and still confirm the person in error as remaining a believing Christian. However, such doctrines are directly related to how the church is organized and its ministry is fulfilled. Doctrines found at this level include those most closely related to ecclesiology and the architecture of theological systems.

Calvinists and Armenians may disagree concerning a number of vital and urgently important doctrines, or could we say at the very least, the best way to understand and express those doctrines. Even as this is so, both can acknowledge each other as genuine Christians. Other differences can become so acute that it is difficult to function together in the local congregation over such an expansive theological difference.

Third-order doctrines are those which are not grounds for fruitful theological discussion and debate, yet do not threaten the fellowship of the local congregation or the denomination. Those who agree on a range of theological issues and doctrines might disagree over matters related to the timing and sequence of events related to Christ's return. Yet, since these are not salvation points, such ecclesiastical debates, though deeply important because of their biblical nature and
connection to the Gospel, do not constitute a ground for separation among believing Christians.

A proper sense of priority and discernment is required for a congregation, for if they do not receive it, the congregation will be left to consider every theological issue as a matter of potential conflict. Yet, at the other extreme, they may see no doctrines as worth defending if conflict is likely to take place in its presentation. The pastor's theological concentration establishes a sense of proper proportion and a larger frame of theological reference. Too, this concentration on the theological dimension of ministry also reminds the pastor of the necessity of constant watchfulness.

At crucial points in the history of Christian theology, the difference between orthodoxy and heresy has often hung on a single word or syllable. Arius argued that the Son was to be understood as being of a similar substance as the Father. Athanasius correctly understood that the entirety of the Gospel was at risk by this argument. As Athanasius faithfully led the Church to understand, the New Testament clearly teaches that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. In the Greek language, the distinction between the word offered by Arius and the correction offered by Athanasius was a single syllable. When the Council of Nicaea met in A.D. 325, the Gospel was defended and defined at this very point. Athanasius functioned as both pastor and theologian, with the result that the heresy of Arius did not spread unchecked and the young Church was kept safe in that area of theology.

C. The Pastor’s Conviction

As a theologian, the pastor must be known for what he knows, teaches, affirms and believes. The health of the local church depends upon pastors who infuse their congregations with biblical, theological conviction. The transfer of these convictions comes by the preaching of the Word of God.

There is no other activity more inherently theological than the preaching of God's Word. Preaching is an exercise in the theological exposition of Scripture. Congregations that are fed ambiguous “principles” supposedly drawn from God's Word are doomed to spiritual immaturity. This condition will soon be visible in the congregation’s compromise, complacency and other spiritual ills. No other reason can be given why Paul commanded Timothy to preach the Word in such solemn and serious terms;

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction (2Ti.4:1-2).

This text points to the inescapable; a ministry’s character is theological. Paul specifically tied theological ministry to the task of preaching, a major calling of
every pastor. As Martin Luther rightly affirmed, the preaching of the Word of God is the first mark of the Church. Where it is found, there one finds the Church; absent, there is no Church, no matter what others claim. Paul had affirmed Scripture as “...inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2Ti.3:16). Through the preaching of the Word of God, the congregation is fed substantial theological doctrine directly from the biblical text.

Expository preaching is the most effective means of imparting biblical knowledge to the congregation. By it, God's people are armed with deep theological conviction. The pastor's conviction about theological preaching is the foundation for transfer of these convictions into the hearts of God's people. The divine agent of this transfer is the Holy Spirit. It is He who opens hearts, eyes, and ears to hear, understand, and receive the Word of God, even as the pastor brings the message He has intended. It is the Holy Spirit, and He alone, who makes the Word come alive in revelation knowledge. The preacher's responsibility is to be clear, specific, systematic, and comprehensive in setting out the biblical convictions that are drawn from God's Word and which, taken together, frame a biblical understanding of the Christian faith and the Christian life.

D. The Pastor's Confession

Pastoral ministry must first be rooted in the pastor's own confession of faith- his personal theological convictions- for these things to come to pass. The faithful pastor does not teach just from historically believed truth, nor truths even now believed by faithful Christians, but out of his own personal confession of belief. That means he does not rely upon the comments of others, but upon the Holy Spirit to reveal to him the Truth.

There is no sense of theological attachment or of academic distance when the pastor sets out a theological vision of the Christian life. All true Christian preaching is experiential preaching. It is preaching that is set before the congregation by a man who is possessed by deep theological passion, specific theological convictions, and an eagerness to see those convictions shared by his congregation.

Faithful preaching does not include the presenting of a set of theological options to a congregation. Pastors must stand ready to define, defend, and document their own deep convictions, drawn from their careful study of God's Word, as well as from their knowledge of the faithful teaching of the Church. Paul is again our model for this pastoral confidence. His personal testimony is intertwined with his own theology. Paul gave a retrospective analysis of his own attempts at human righteousness, coupled with his bold embrace of the Gospel as grounded in grace alone.

“But whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ,” Paul asserted. "More than that, I count all things to be
loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Php.3:7-11).

Paul did not hide behind an academic detachment from the doctrines he so powerfully taught, though he studied under the premier “Bible College professor” of his day, a man named Gamaliel (Ac.22:3). Nor did he set before his congregation in Philippi a series of alternate renderings of doctrine. Instead, he taught clearly, defended his case, and made clear that he embraced those doctrines as the substance of his life and faith. Yet we wish to say too, that the experiential nature of the pastor’s confession does not imply that the authority for theology is in personal experience. No, authority must always remain with the Word of God. No experience of the pastor’s theological calling underlines the fact that the preacher is speaking from within the circle of faith as a believer; he is not from some detached position, such as a mere teacher outside the five-fold calling.

The pastor's confession of his faith and personal example add authority and authenticity to the pastoral ministry. Except this be true, the pastor can sound more like a theological consultant than a faithful shepherd. The congregation must be able to observe the pastor’s ministry and lifestyle as governed by these truths, not merely teaching them in the pulpit.

In the end, every faithful pastor’s theological confession must include an eschatological confidence that God will preserve His work to the end. Paul did so, saying, “For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day” (2Ti.1:12).

Also, every preacher receives the same mandate that Paul handed down to Timothy; “Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (2Ti.1:13-14). He was saying that at the core of our calling as pastors, we are the stewards of sound Words and the guardians of doctrinal treasure which has been entrusted to us. Can we not say, “The pastor who is no theologian is no pastor?”

The following portions of this study are indicative of positions and truths that a pastor should study, meditate on, hold to and minister to others if he would fulfill his responsibility as a “Theologian”. While there are negatives presented here, as opposed to truths presented, continuation in the Truth is what makes men free (Jn.8:31-32).
II. WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

God created man to be a very unique being. When considering the complexities of man and all our abilities that supersede all other beings or animals, there is one distinguishing feature that remarkably stands out. We are by nature “religious.” From the beginning of time in all geographic locations and in all cultures it is evident that man had/has an inward desire to worship.

Though the word “religion” has various connotations, it basically carries the idea that there is belief of a Higher Being than man; One who deserves to be worshipped. Immanuel Kant, who was more of a philosopher than a theologian, believed religion was the result of practical reason. He taught that morality could not exist without the existence of immorality. This philosophy was quickly adopted by numerous theologians whose acceptance of this resulted in the shaping of Christian theology.

Religion is more than a judgment of moral ethics, but is a way of life with feelings and attitudes as well as doctrines and beliefs. When one examines, interprets, and organizes doctrines and teachings from the One whom it is based on, in a believing, religious fashion, it is considered a theology (theos= God; ology= study of). If the founder or person who began the movement was Christ, as in the Book we study, then it is called Christian theology. That is how the name of this study came about.

What is theology though? We have danced around the term without a formal definition and introduced it with religion, but what does it mean? The basic term means “the study of God,” noted above. The objective is to gain an understanding of God and His relation to creation, mankind and his condition, along with the redemptive work He has provided. There are five facets to Christian theology. First, theology’s main source of understanding is from the Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments. Second, it is systematic, meaning it is derived from the entire Bible, rather than an isolated text to develop a doctrine. Third, theology relates to general issues pertaining to culture and learning. Fourth, theology must be contemporary concerning language, concepts and thoughts and must be timeless concerning its application. Fifth, it must be practical, relating to life rather than concepts or beliefs.

Systematic theology attempts to define or explain the doctrines of God drawn from the entire Bible; however it is closely related to Biblical theology. The term Biblical theology carries several meanings. In the 1940’s and 50’s it was thought of as a movement, but began to die out in the 1960’s because of its unbiblical concepts. Second, the term refers to the study of a doctrine taken from a particular portion of the Bible, such as the Book of John or just the Old Testament, etc. Lastly, it was defined as any theological study that was/is taken from the Bible. Using the last definition we can see how it would have to be related to systematic theology.

Historical theology means theology that is developed during the history of the Church. It is sometimes used as the way a doctrine is developed over the course of the Church Age.
and is valuable to understanding our contemporary view. Its relationship to systematic theology is valuable in knowing how social conditions affected the views of the Church.

Philosophy contributes to systematic theology three ways: 1) it supplies the content; 2) it defends or establishes truth; 3) it scrutinizes its concepts and arguments. Christian philosophy is the concepts and beliefs of theology and that which helps maintain correct doctrine.

Without theology the Church would be on an unstable course. If the Bible is the truth that Christianity is based on, then we need a logical study of that truth to prevent heresies from influencing or filtering into our beliefs. The need for theology is also important because truth and experience is related and theology provides answers for our Christian faith.

Another form of theology is called natural theology. Thomas Aquinas argued in favor of this. He viewed God’s existence as being based on reason rather than relying on any external sources. Karl Barth refuted the entire concept of natural theology and clung to Church dogma, where he began with what the Word of God says and is known to be in the light of this revelation.

Until the 13th century, theology was not considered a science, but Thomas Aquinas thought of it as the “queen of sciences”. He considered it as a derived science because it proceeded from principles revealed by God. He said that it superseded and was nobler than all other sciences. While other sciences are based on human reason or natural light, theology is Divine, based on God’s revelation to man.

The primary basis of theology comes from the Bible; this must always be. God has revealed Himself in general ways such as through history and in nature. These are secondary sources compared to the Bible. The purpose of theology is to preserve all that God has for us.

III. THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy has had more influence on theology throughout the history of the Church than any other human inquiry or knowledge discipline. The reason for this is the commonality of study and an overlap of the two fields, even though they have taken on five different forms. Tertullian felt there were no relationships between the two disciplines and went so far as to say they were as different as Athens is from Jerusalem. His approach to philosophy allowed absolutely no contribution to Christian theology. This view also appeared in the Middle Ages. Martin Luther picked up on this as he rejected Catholic philosophy taught by Thomas Aquinas. Luther said, “Let philosophy remain within her own bounds, as God has appointed, and let us make use of her as a character.”

Augustine had a different view altogether. He felt that theology could be provided clarification by philosophy but stressed the priority of faith and the acceptance of biblical revelation. Augustine declared that philosophy might help us understand Christian theology and adopted the philosophy of Plato as a means for theology. Plato’s theory of
knowledge was that it came from an ideal or pure form. He believed our soul had contact with pure knowledge in the preexistent state that enabled us to recognize what is right, truthful, etc. in the present day.

Still another form of philosophy put forth is that theology is sometimes established by it. Thomas Aquinas found this to be the basis of Aristotle’s view of the existence of God. He used this theory to give credibility to theology, thus developing key doctrines based on “accidental metaphysics.”

The fourth form is that theology may be judged by philosophy. The problem with this form is that deism came along and would only accept the tenets of religion which could be tested and demonstrated.

The fifth form states that in some cases philosophy can supply content to theology. In this form Georg Hegel viewed Christianity as an idealistic philosophy. He considered the truths of Christianity as examples of universal truth that would become a dialectical pattern for history to follow. This resulted in a rationalized version of Christianity where everything became predictable, leaving Christianity to be modified to accommodate philosophy.

A. Pragmatism

There are several 20th century philosophies that are worthy of mention. One of the most distinctive American philosophies that have influenced people in the 20th century is pragmatism. This philosophy emphasizes the idea that there is no absolute truth, but rather the meaning of an idea lies solely in its practical results. It tends to assume that immediate workability is the criterion. This results in short term profitability with the long term profitability being exploited.

B. Existentialism

Second is existentialism which attempts to emphasize the priority of existence over essence. This philosophy has developed four tenets:

1. Irrationalism;

   The first is irrationalism, which says reality cannot be captured within or reduced to intellectual concepts, or to put ideas into a logical system. This leaves the meaning of reality as being developed by one’s own free choice.

2. Individuality;

   The tenet of individuality places the individual as unique and important. It considers any effort of placing a person in a category such as race, age, male or female as abstract and not reality.
3. Freedom;

Freedom is the third aspect, which is the basis for atheism. It says “I am free and nothing can hinder or decide my destiny, not even God.”

4. Subjectivity;

Subjectivity is probably the most widely accepted tenet by theologians in the 20th century. It is based on two types of truth, objective and subjective. Objective truth is when truth is based on an object, and subjective truth is based on the results or the effects of an object. The bottom line for this tenet is that truth is truth when it “becomes truth to me.”

C. Analytical Philosophy

Another philosophy that was popular in the 20th century is analytical philosophy. It carries the idea of clarifying concepts and is language oriented. Often it focuses on illumination and understanding. It addresses questions such as, “What do you mean by that?” or “What kind of statement is that?”

D. Theology and Philosophy

There is room for philosophy in theology, but strict guidelines must be used. Erickson says the two basic guidelines we must follow, that will establish a correct balance without inferring with God’s word or true theology are:

1. Revelation must supply the content of theology;

He says by keeping with our fundamental presuppositions, revelation rather than philosophy will supply the content of our theology. He says we must use the capacity of reasoning given by God to work out the implications of the revealed body of truth.

2. Philosophy as an activity;

Erickson also says we must keep philosophy as an activity rather than as a body of truth, which of course must be done, since the Word of God is absolute truth.

The primary use of philosophy should be to: a) sharpen our understanding; b) sort out presuppositions behind an idea or a system of thought; c) trace out the implications of an idea; d) make us aware of the necessity of testing truth-claims.Whenever we critique a view or an idea that is different from our own, we are being objective and our understanding will be enhanced.
IV. THE METHOD OF THEOLOGY

The present day theological scene must take into account a number of tendencies that face the Church. The first thing to consider is the progressive theological trend. Augustine’s theology, under the influence of Plato, dominated the Church for over 800 years. That was followed by Thomas Aquinas who supplied the Church, until the Reformation, with theology. It is interesting to note that he too was influenced by a Greek philosopher (Aristotle) as well. These two men led the Church in theological thought for approximately 1,500 years.

The Reformers broke out of this mold and developed a theology independent from the Catholic Church, initiated by John Calvin. This was enhanced by John Wesley and for the next 250 years there were no other major theological figures. From that time until the middle of the 20th century, a number of theologians came forth and influenced the Church. It is worthy to note that each one had a shorter influence than his predecessor.

Another event was the demise of great theological schools and the generalization of theologians. Since the 1950’s, theologians seem to be in clusters or various camps.

Another thought is that there are no theological giants today. Though out Church History, we have had men who have stood out because of their views on theology. That was true until the first half of the 20th century, but due to technology and the explosion of knowledge, we are experiencing a rapid transfer of information. Theologians today tend to specialize rather than to master the whole of the Bible. That puts in jeopardy Systemic Theology which requires knowledge of all the Scriptures. The result is that we are seeing more Biblical Theology addressed than the time spent in mastery of Systematic Theology.

Another matter involved is the increased influence of behavioral sciences, which have brought to the Church the liberation theologies, namely psychology and sociology. This has had a tremendous impact on the Third World Countries, Blacks, feminists, etc.

The fifth factor is globalization. As Christianity reaches into and advances in the Third World nations, influences from those countries are filtering back into theology. This needs to be heard, because in the past theologians were primarily out of the European and Western cultures which dominated the Church.

A. Process of Theology

Besides the method, we want to consider the process of theology. While theology has been thought of as an art or science, it still requires a procedure to develop it. Erickson stresses that the process should be a steady movement from exegesis to biblical theology to systematic theology.
1. **Collection of biblical material;**

The first step involves gathering all the passages relevant to the doctrine that is being investigated. The procedure begins with an exegesis (critical explanation or interpretation of the text), which includes consulting grammar, dictionaries, etc.

2. **Unify material gathered;**

The next step is to unify the biblical material gathered. It is necessary to look for unity in doctrine from the various writers such as Matthew, Luke, or John and correlate their thoughts. They must harmonize. Before we begin to interpret Scripture, the whole Bible should be taken into account. Even the Old Testament and the New Testament should be approached with unity in mind.

3. **Analyze the meaning;**

Third, we need analyze the meaning of biblical teaching. At this point we must be able to take a group of biblical terms and relate them to a contemporary setting. To do this we first have to understand what it means. When we explain it to others, it must be done in a way or in terms that they can understand.

4. **Examine the historical treatment;**

The fourth step is to examine the historical treatment. This involves understanding the development of a doctrine. We should take into account time periods in history that may be similar to our current conditions and consider how it was treated by former theologians.

5. **Examine cultural perspectives;**

The fifth step is to give consideration to other cultural perspectives. Theology should benefit from globalization.

6. **Identify the essence of the doctrine;**

Sixth, we need to identify the essence of the doctrine. This is a matter of separating temporary doctrines or Laws, such as in the Old Testament, from the New Testament and contemporary Christianity. It also involves the separation of a truth expressed to certain people from the culture.
7. Illumination from extra-biblical sources;

The seventh step is the illumination from extra-biblical sources. We cannot ignore the fact that God has introduced to man and only to man both general and special revelation. A word of caution here, for that “revelation” must be in harmony with God’s Word.

8. Contemporary expression of the doctrine;

The eighth step is the contemporary expression of the doctrine. Theology must relate to the people that it is presented to. Without an understanding of the contemporary culture and its people, it would not be possible to adequately convey the timeless truths of the Bible. This requires a careful study of the culture.

9. Development of a central interpretive motif;

The ninth step is to consider the development of a central interpretive motif. This is important because it lends to the unity of the system and enhances the ability to communicate. When a theologian has a clear motif and understands how to place sub-topics and co-topics in systematic positions, readers can more easily grasp what is being conveyed.

10. Stratification of topics;

The last step is the stratification of topics. This involves the arrangement of topics and sub-topics by importance. It simply means that it must be organized.

V. THEOLOGY AND CRITICAL STUDY OF THE BIBLE

Shortly after the Middle Ages, curiosity began to arise about the authenticity of authorship, chronology, dates and historical events of the Bible and the various doctrines. Archbishop James Ussher was thought of as the one who developed a chronology of the Bible and actually dated creation at 4004 B.C. Gradually the methodologies of studying the Bible changed and the development of historical criticism took shape. The Pentateuch was the first to be examined and by the 19th century the tenets of historical criticism were established.

Since the early days of critical study it has become very technical and the procedures have been highly polished. With the help of computers and other developed skills, we are able to break down criticism into several types:

A. Textual criticism

This system is used to determine the origin of the text by comparing manuscripts.
B. Literary-source Criticism

This system is used to determine the literary sources by which the Bible was derived.

C. Form Criticism

This is the process of going behind the written sources of the Bible into the oral time period when the Bible was spoken. It takes into account the historical traditions. In many ways this has been the outgrowth of source criticism and was used by many scholars to dig into the written source to determine the growth of tradition in the oral period. This criticism concerns itself with the separation of folklore from the facts of the author. Or, one may take into account the customs or traditions of the time period that might interfere with the oral expressions of the author. Obviously a person could go to the extreme and destroy the validity of God’s Word.

D. Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism is the study of the activity of the authors and how they may have shaped, modified or prepared the final product that they wrote. Redaction criticism moves beyond the literary-source, form, and tradition criticism, using the insights gathered from them. Literary-source criticism sees the writers as passively accumulating the written sources into the final product, but redaction criticism views their writing as much more creative. While form criticism focuses on the independent individual units of material, redaction criticism concentrates on the framework and with later forms of the tradition, and, at the final stage, with the writer’s own frame of reference.

E. Historical Criticism

This criticism draws from all the above criticisms, but uses data from archaeology and secular history. The main purpose is to establish the authorship and determine the time of the occurrence.

F. Comparative-religions Criticism

This study makes the assumption that all religions have the same common pattern of development and all are from either polytheism or monotheism. It also explains in terms of faith the history of the Judeo-Christian beliefs.

G. Structural Criticism

Structural criticism looks into the relationship between the structure of the surface of the writing and the deeper structures of the literary work. When the “Biblical
Theology” movement collapsed, structure criticism began to gain prominence. It was a fresh new turn in the critical study of the Bible which attempted to describe the content of the Bible by using its own categories without any philosophical categories. Structural exegesis attempted to understand the author’s intended meaning by focusing on the linguistic, narrative, or mythical structures.

H. Reader-response Criticism

This criticism allows the reader rather than the text to create the meaning. This criticism has gained more prominence since the late 1960’s. It places supremacy of the reader over the text. It takes into account the interests of the reader in relation to understanding the text.

I. Guidelines

Here we provide some guidelines for evaluating critical methods:

1. Guard against assumptions that are anti-supernatural;
2. Detect the presence of circular reasoning (a use of reason in which the premises depends on or is equivalent to the conclusion, a method of false logic by which “this is used to prove that, and that is used to prove this”);
3. Be watchful for unwarranted inferences;
4. Be aware of arbitrary ideas and subjectivity;
5. Be alert to the presence of assumptions regarding as antithetical relationships between faith and reason.

It must be kept in mind that we are dealing with problems rather than certainties and where probabilities build on one another, they should have a cumulative effect on the conclusion. Biblical criticism, if carefully used and based on the assumptions that are consistent with the Bible, can shed light on the meaning of the Scripture.

VI. CONTEMPORIZING THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

Probably the greatest concern that the Church faces today is the difference between the present day world and the Bible. Theologians have been struggling with this problem, especially since the Industrial Revolution. It is even more of a concern today in the high tech Information Age. Not only is the language difficult, but the concepts that related to people 2,000 years ago seen to be a misfit in today’s culture.

An essay by Rudolf Bultmann took the theological community by surprise as his essay declared the Bible to be out of date. It was entitled, “New Testament and Mythology.”
He described the New Testament as a three-storied structure. In it, there was Heaven, containing God and the angels. Then there was the earth, a place of habitation for humans. Finally, there was hell, the dwelling place for the devil and his demons.

Bultmann addressed what he called outmoded myths. He said the average Christian lives in two worlds. The first world is between 11:00 A.M. and 12:00 A.M. on Sunday, where they see ax-heads float, rivers stop as if dammed, donkeys speak and people walk on water. The second world they experience, during the rest of the week, is where they live in a highly technological society of automobiles, commercial airlines, and computers. In the Christian’s biblical world they pray for divine healing, but in the real world they go to secular doctors. Bultmann asks, how long can this kind of schizophrenia be maintained?

Many theologians and segments of Christianity agree with Bultmann and say it is time to change the outmoded concepts, but want to maintain genuine Christianity. So they have come up with five abiding elements: 1) an institution; 2) acts of God; 3) experiences; 4) doctrines; 5) a way of life.

A. Transformers: An Approach to Contemporizing Theology

Two approaches were taken to preserve the major components of Christianity. The first is the transformers. They felt the way to approach contemporizing theology was by re-expressing the message in a more intelligible form. This preferred and more liberal approach is known as modernist. They consider truth to be relative and humanity was to judge what was right or wrong. Their key word was “relevance” rather than “authoritativeness.” Revelation from God was completely left out of the equation. It was out of the transformer’s approach that we began to hear the “Death of God” theology. Those theologians came up with the theory that God is untenable. That view of faith was strictly secular and God was not transcendent in prayer or worship, but rather in activities such as the civil rights movement.

B. Translators: Second Approach to Contemporizing Theology

The second contemporizing approach is the translators. They too have a desire to present a fresh new word to the modern world, but to do it by translation. This concept would present the Bible as if it were written to us in our present day situation. It is a more conservative approach that maintains humans must measure up to truth. God is the One who speaks to humans and a transformation must take place in them, rather than vice versa. This brought on the horizon a number of paraphrased Bibles such as the Living Bible, the J.B. Phillips Version and even the Cotton Patch Version.

One of the problems the translators have wrestled with is how to handle some of the expressed forms that do not relate to persons living today. For instance, God is pictured as the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. He is also seen feeding and protecting the birds in the air. Yet many modern persons living in an urban setting rarely have seen, nor do they have a clue as to what a shepherd does. Can
God be presented in a way that will relate to cybernetics or nuclear war? Attempts to get to the basic essence of the message, recognizing that all revelation has a point should be the goal of all translations.

**VII. THEOLOGY AND ITS LANGUAGE**

The Church is in the business of communication and has always been concerned about its language. Early theologians paid serious attention to the nature and the function of theological language. Early in the 20th century a new dimension of urgency swept the Church as philosophy, which has always been a partner with theology, began to direct special attention to the analysis.

Moore and Russell were philosophers who began the analysis of theological language. This movement became known as “logical positivism”. They broke this down into two basic group types of cognitive propositions, a priori and synthetic.

**A. A Priori**

A priori has to do with analytic statements, such as “two plus two equals four”. The symbols two and plus, when combined in this fashion, have a meaning of four. These mathematical-type statements are absolutely true, but are uninformative regarding the empirical world.

**B. Synthetic Statements**

The other type is called synthetic statements. In these statements the predicate is not contained within the subject. For example, look at the statement, “all bachelors are tall.” The word “tall” has nothing to do with bachelors and therefore this is a synthetic statement. If we were to say, “All bachelors are unmarried,” this would be an analytic statement, because unmarried is contained in the subject.

**C. Verified or Falsified Statements**

Statements that can be verified or falsified are considered meaningful by philosophers. On the other hand no matter how impressive a sentence may be, it could be considered meaningless. It has always been the role of the philosophers to examine the actual functions in context of the language. However, it was Wittgenstein who coined the term “language game.” This term refers to the activity of language, such as jokes, prayer, reporting a news event, or cursing. He says the problem with the verifiability principle does not lie in the criterion it sets for the empirical type of sentence, but the problem consists in the failure to recognize other forms of language as meaningful.
D. Other Language Considerations

1. Patterns;

William Hordern observed that religious and theological language follows the same pattern as personal language. As a person would reveal himself to another, so it is with God. By revelation God reveals Himself. Hordern says God’s acts in history and His Words given through the prophets constitute His self-manifestation or revelation. He ascribes God as being a person or a subject, not just a thing or an object.

2. Verifiability;

John Hick acknowledged the verifiability principle, and sought to keep meaningfulness for the language of Christianity and introduced the concept of “eschatological verification.” For instance, currently we do not have verification of these theological propositions, but some day we will. If life after death exists, we will experience it.

3. Cognition;

Frederick Ferre has concluded that Christianity is cognitive, in other words, the truth-status of its tenets is determinable. It does not deal only with natural facts, but rather the reference of theology’s symbols as to metaphysical fact of some kind. The nature of metaphysics is conceptual synthesis. A metaphysical fact, then, is a concept that plays a key role within that system.

4. Logical positivism;

Erickson rejected the narrow criterion of meaningfulness proposed by logical positivism. He maintains knowledge is not only obtained by sensory perception but by theological symbols and direct revelation from God. Where meaning is objectively present in symbols, discernment must be used, because there is no exact scientific method to extract meaning.

5. Speech-act theory;

John Austin began questioning the long term standing of philosophy which says, “to say something, at least in all cases worth considering, is to state something.” He began what is referred to as "speech-act theory". His initial concern focused on utterances or statements which are to be performed, such as wedding vows, making a bet, naming something or making a bequest. Though speech-act theory can be beneficial to us by reminding us of the variety of genres in the Bible, their differing purposes and elements.
that are involved in communication, it is in agreement with the evangelical belief of the nature of theology.

VIII. POSTMODERNITY AND THEOLOGY

The word “modern” has taken on a new definition in recent years. We normally associate it with the word “contemporary” which has to do with things that are the most current. In this sense modernity would not pass, only the contents would change. However, philosophers are designating a particular period of time to the word “modern.” To be more specific they are using the year 1789, the fall of the French Bastille, to 1989, fall of the Berlin Wall, as the modern period. Many agree this period has numerous qualities that intellectually characterize it. By establishing a definite period of time as modern, it makes it possible to establish a pre-modernity and post-modernity.

A. Pre-modernism

Pre-modernism has been established by belief in the rationality of the universe. Its dualistic nature was thought of as being supernatural or at least extra-natural. Commonly this belief was considered to have a form of religious super-naturalism that went beyond the observable universe characterizing God as the Creator and the Sustainer of all things. The pre-modern view was teleological. In other words it recognized order and purpose in the universe. Even history was thought of as having a pattern. It was believed that an outside force, God, was moving history toward a goal of His choosing.

After considering pre-modernism, Erickson brought our attention to modernism. Some of the points are the same, but there are significant differences. Modernism maintains the same objective reality of the physical world, but it differs by removing the supernatural or at least the extra-natural basis. The historical patterns and events are explained as social realities, omitting the assistance of a transcending God. Therefore, causation is efficient rather than final.

Philosopher Immanuel Kant also contributed much to the modernism view. Kant added two elements to this philosophy. He believed that sense experience from which knowledge can be extracted must be included. He also included the rational and logical structure of the mind which furnishes organization to data. Since God is not experienced by sensory experience, He cannot be the object of theoretical reason. If God is an object of faith, then practical reason omits God because He cannot be proven.

Modernism sought an explanation to cover everything. For creation and biology it turned to Darwin. In the field of psychology it looked toward Freud. For the economic and governmental aspects, its focus was on Marx. Of course, all three of these men gave deceptive explanations and their thinking cannot be followed by Believers.
B. Postmodern Age

Finally Erickson considers theology in the postmodern age. By understanding premodernism and modernism one can begin to understand how postmodernism came into being. Postmodernism attempted to eliminate God from traditional doctrines, going to more liberal extremes than pre-modernism or modernism.

By living in an era where postmodernism exists, we must acknowledge that a shift is taking place from modernity to post-modernity. According to Erickson this will probably continue to change to possibly a “post post-modernity period.” He points out that as modern medical understanding or modern technology continues to advance, so will post-modernity. However, for the pastor as a theologian, the truths of God will show up and God will work His plan in these “post-modern” times too. He always has and He always will. It is sufficient to say that God does not change, His plan does not change, and He is in authority to bring it all to pass.

In conclusion Erickson says we need to use post-modernity to our advantage, though we do not agree with many of its concepts. By considering globalization we need to take into account multiculturalism in our theology; not to change what we believe, but to include that in our concepts. Whether it is political correctness or the feminist movement, the same should apply.

IX. GOD’S UNIVERSAL REVELATION

There is no way that man, a finite being, could possibly know God, an Infinite Being, without God revealing Himself to man. Theologians classify revelation in two ways. First is general revelation, in which God communicates Himself to everyone at all times and in all places. This is done through nature, history, and the inner being of the human. Scripture says, “The heavens are telling the glory of God” (Ps.19:1). Paul reminds us that “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” (Ro.1:20).

A. General Revelation

Natural theology is the revelation of God through nature or natural creation. Many point to the teleological argument as the acts of God, but controversy has developed over this issue. Critics point out that many acts of nature are not so good such as tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. To attribute these to God would bring a distorted view of God, for He is always good (Ge.1:31; Ja.1:17; He.6:5). They also point out that Darwism appeals to many and the theory of organic evolution may distort the view of God. Of course, God is not the Author of anything bad (1Ch.16:34; Ge.1:3-31).

General revelation comes through history (His-story) also. God is always involved in the destiny of nations, charting their courses and controlling the outcome of wars,
etc. (Job.12:23; Ps.47:7-8; 66:7; Is.10:5-13; Da.2:21; Ac.17:26). We have seen this with Israel and the surrounding nations, right up through modern history. Many testimonies of soldiers and generals in combat have witnessed the supernatural intervention of God which determined the outcome of battles, especially when the war was between an anti-God despot and Israel or a nation which supported the advance of the Gospel and an evil one which did not honor God.

Of course God’s highest form of earthly creation is man, where God not only participates in the physical and mental structure, but in man’s moral and spiritual aspects. Paul indicated that the law has been written on the hearts of persons who do not have any special revelation of His law (Ro.2:11-16). This law, written on man’s heart, is not given to excuse him from sin by doing well or by living a moral life, but to reveal man’s sin, causing him to seek God and ultimately coming to repentance and confession of Christ as Savior. It is similar to the Law of Moses, which pointed out sin in Old Testament but could not save man from sin. Even in Old Testament times, salvation was by faith and not strictly by law.

B. Implications of General Revelation

There are six implications unique to general revelation:

1. All persons have knowledge of God. They may not be conscious of it or it may be suppressed, but it exists and it will cause them to recognize truth. This is also the reason that men in all cultures of all times have sought to worship something or someone.

2. By examining general revelation we will have a greater understanding of special revelation. This will help us understand in greater detail the greatness of God and the image of God in people.

3. God is not condemning those who have never heard the Gospel in the formal sense. He has provided everyone with an opportunity to seek truth.

4. General revelation explains why there are so many religions. They have a basis in truth, but have gone astray because they have suppressed that Truth.

5. Biblical revelation is not distinct from what is known of the natural realm.

6. Humans are not their own accomplishment. Truth is from God and it is His truth. He has structured the entire universe with it.
C. God’s Special Revelation

The second classification of revelation is called special revelation. It involves God’s particular communications and manifestations of Himself to particular persons at particular times. When God manifests Himself to certain persons at definite times and places, allowing them to enter into a redemptive relationship with Him, it is His special revelation. This was and even is necessary because man lost his relationship with God at the Fall in the Garden. Special revelation is primarily relational; however knowing God through general revelation is still available and necessary to know and understand Him.

The style of special revelation is personal and is seen in a number of ways. God’s name alone indicates this; “I AM WHO I AM” [I AM THAT WHICH I AM] (Ex.3:14, Young’s Literal Translation). His Covenants with Noah, Abraham and the nation of Israel reveals God as being personal. Many of the testimonies also reveal man having a personal relationship with God. Even Paul’s life shows us an acquaintance with God when he said, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Php.3:10). Even the Scripture itself is personal in nature.

D. Anthropic Character of Special Revelation

The anthropic (pertaining to human beings) character of special revelation (meaning the use of human languages common at the time), reveals God as transcendent and outside our sensory experience. Koine Greek, the language of the New Testament, at one time was thought of as a divinely created language because it was different from classical Greek, but this is not so. It was the common language of the day, used by ordinary people. Revelation is also anthropic because it came in forms that are part of ordinary, everyday human experience. For instance, God frequently used dreams to reveal Himself. He appeared to man as an ordinary human being; even Jesus was an "ordinary person" who had no visible distinctiveness in His natural form. While this is true, He was indeed God, explained by the technical words, hypostatic union, indicating He was 100% God and 100% man.

God has made Himself known by a whole series of events that are emphasized in the Bible. The most important event to Israel, which is still celebrated by the Jews today, is the deliverance from Egypt through the series of plagues culminating in the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. These historical acts of God, as described in the Scriptures, are revelations of His nature and indicate the need of man to be delivered from the hands of a despot (Satan) bent on man's total destruction.
E.  Incarnational Revelation

The most unique event of all time for all people in which God revealed Himself is the incarnation. Jesus' life and speech was a special revelation of God. Hebrew 1:1-2 indicates that God had spoken through the prophets, but now He has spoken through and by His Son. When Jesus spoke, it was not His own words; He only spoke the Words of the Father. He also demonstrated the Father’s attributes, bringing acts and the Word together.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Scriptures, as revelation, are progressive. However, care needs to be taken when using this term, because the term also represents the idea of gradual evolutionary development. The "revelation" we are speaking of builds on earlier revelation. For example, Jesus elevated the teaching of the Law by expanding them and by internalizing them. He often began His instruction by saying, "...You have heard…But I say to you." The revelation of God is always progressive and moves toward a more complete form.

God has gone to great lengths to initiate and make Himself known in a more complete way than by general revelation. Through special revelation, humanity is able to grasp Him in a personal way and understand critical aspects of their Creator, His love to them, and the need to live a life under His authority.

X.  INSPIRATION

We often say the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but what is meant by the “inspiration of Scripture?” According to Erickson, it is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers, which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God. God showed His inspiration when Holy Spirit prompted Paul to say that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti.3:16-17). The word "inspiration" here is actually "God breathed into" in the Greek.

The difference between inspiration and revelation is that inspiration relates more to the relaying of truth while revelation is the communication of truth from God to humans. This revelation was necessary to be recorded to maintain its accuracy and to preserve it; therefore the ones who received it put it in writing as they were "breathed into" by God. While revelation and inspiration are usually thought of as together, not all revelation is inspiration. We find numerous words of unbelievers recorded in the Scripture, such as the words of Judas or when Peter denied Jesus, yet the Holy Spirit wanted them included. This is also especially true of Job’s “friends.” On the other hand, not all inspiration is revelation. This can happen in two ways. First, not all of the inspirations were recorded and included in the Scripture by the Holy Spirit. And second, there were times when the writers had inspiration, but without revelation they could not understand what they were writing. When Daniel inquired from God about His revelation (dream), Daniel was told to
seal up the Book until the end (chp.12). In other words, it was not the time for the dream to be revealed.

There are two methods of formulating a theory of inspiration. The first emphasizes what the biblical writers say about the Bible and the view of it revealed in the way they used it. The second examines what the Bible is like, analyzing the ways in which the writers report events comparing parallel accounts. The method used for constructing the doctrine of inspiration must be the same method used for constructing other biblical doctrines.

The Bible declares itself to be inspired. The New Testament authors regarded the Scriptures (Old Testament) as inspired. Above all, we must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe.1:20). Paul also expressed the same; “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness” (2Ti.3:16). The word “all” includes every portion. Even Peter said in Acts 1:16, “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David…” David was considered God’s mouthpiece and the same thought was carried on through the writers.

Though inspiration was not permanent or continuous in the lives of the prophets and the apostles, it was in full operation while they were writing the Scripture. Their lives were not perfect and they made many mistakes, but it did not interfere or diminish the quality of the inspired Word of God. Because the Scripture is inspired, we can have confidence that it is truly divine revelation. It is to be used as our only guide to faith and practice in this life. We are encouraged to intensively read and study it, not for our knowledge, but to know the One who is behind it.

XI. INERRANCY

Plain and simple, if the Bible has error in it, God is not God. The doctrine of inerrancy deals with complete truthfulness of the teachings of the Bible. If the special revelation of God is recorded in the Scripture, then we want to be sure that the Bible is the dependable source of that revelation. The word “infallibility” has been often used as a synonym for inerrancy, meaning in some usages that the Bible was not necessarily accurate in all of its factual references, but that it has attained the purpose God had planned for it. It is theologically, historically, and epistemologically (pertaining to epistemology, a branch of philosophy that investigates the origin, nature, methods, and limits of human knowledge) important to know whether the Bible is absolutely and entirely truthful.

A. Early Church Fathers

Church history has always held to the inerrancy of the Bible, but not until recently has a fully enunciated theory been established. Augustine treated the Scripture as reliable and truthful, but on the other hand he used a very allegorical approach to its interpretation. Luther was not always a model of consistency and Calvin
maintained that many of the New Testament writers exercised plenty of freedom as they quoted from the Old Testament.

The epistemological question goes to the heart of the matter and asks, “How do we know the Bible is true?” There are some things that can be scientifically and historically verified or proven false by the limitations in those areas, but many things cannot be verified or proven false because they are not in the realm of our sensory experience. If the Bible does not check out to be truthful in the verifiable or falsifiable areas, then it certainly would not be truthful in the non-sensory experience areas. Even though the Bible is a Book that demands faith to accept God, some concur with the statement that just because the Bible says it, they believe it. Yet, many theologians and philosophers would say, “I believe it because I choose to.”

B. Problem Scriptures

This brings us to the problem areas of Scripture and how to deal with them. Erickson points out numerous problematic passages that scholars struggle with, and some we may not be able to resolve. The four Gospels have a number of differences that challenge the inerrancy of the Bible. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles also seem to face difficulty when they are contrasted. There are several times that the chronology of the Bible, along with numbers of horseman, chariots, and men vary considerably.

There have been strategies that several conservative theologians have employed to deal with these problems. B.B. Warfield used an abstract approach. He realized there were problems but considered them only as problems. He said the inspiration and consequent inerrancy of the Bible is so great that no amount of data of this type can overthrow it (see 2Sa.22:31; De.4:2; Ps.18:30; 105:19; 119:89; Mk.7:13; Jn.17:17; Ep.5:26; Php.2:16; He.4:12; 1Pe.1:25; etc.). Edward Young as well as Louis Gaussen approached this in a harmonistic way. They claimed those difficulties could be resolved by using currently available information. Everett Harrison leaned to a moderate harmonistic approach, recognizing that the Bible does not teach inerrancy and therefore it is not necessary to be concerned about discrepancies because they can be solved. Edward Carnell adopted the position that inspiration guarantees only accurate reproduction of the sources the Scripture writer employed, not correction of them.

The bottom line to inerrancy is in the understanding that the Bible, when correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time it was written, and in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all that it affirms. We may not understand all problem areas or why they exist, but it can be fully relied on in all that it teaches.
XII. **AUTHORITY OF THE WORD**

When we consider the meaning of the authority of the Bible, we are referring to the Bible as the expression of God’s will to us, possessing the right to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves.

The word “authority” introduces a lot of controversy in today’s society, especially among the younger generation who is seeking independence from authority and the exercise of their own free will. Even in the Church, authority is commonly being flaunted, sometimes for good reasons. When authority is misused or abused, people are suppressed and resist its over-bearing rule. However, we should be careful not to confuse authority with force.

**A. Delegated Authority**

God has delegated authority to others in several ways. One way is when citizens of a country delegate it by electing officials to represent them. Another way it happens is when an executive of a company assigns responsibilities to others to complete a task. Still another unique way of delegating authority is done by an author who writes a book. The words in that book become just as authoritative as though the person were speaking.

What about religious authority? From the Christian perspective, God is The Authority in all matters because of who He is, but there are many divided opinions on how this happens. According to the neo-orthodox thought, He exercises authority in a direct act of revelation. They view the Bible not as the Word of God, but merely an instrument through which God speaks or meets people.

Charismatic believers view the authority of God in a more direct fashion. They expect God to speak to individuals by a direct revelation. The Roman Catholics delegate a person or institution as the channel of the authority of God. Erickson views God Himself as the ultimate authority in religious matters with the right to establish the standard for belief and practice.

**B. Divine Order**

We know that revelation is God making His Truth known to man while inspiration preserves what the Bible says by guaranteeing it is the same as though God spoke it. On the other hand, the reader must understand the meaning of the Scriptures and believe the origin is divine. There are several views on how this is accomplished. The Roman Catholics feel this should be accomplished through the church. Others believe this should be accomplished on an intellectual basis. Still others contend that this should be accomplished by the Holy Spirit illuminating the understanding of the reader, of which principle we believe also (Dan.2:22, 28-29; Amos 3:7).
The Bible itself contends that the Holy Spirit is needed to understand the meaning and truths of the Scriptures. This fact is established by God’s transcendency and numerous Scriptures. Jesus made this clear (Mt.13:13-15; Mk.8:18). Paul addressed this issue also (Ro.1:21; 11:8; 1Co.2:14). In summarizing the role of the Holy Spirit, we need to look at the Words of Jesus and remember that He guides us into all truth (Jn.14-16).

The objective Word, written Scripture, together with the subjective word, inner illumination and conviction of the Holy Spirit, should accomplish divine authority for every Christian. It is illumination by the Holy Spirit that helps the reader and the hearer understand the Bible, creating conviction that it is true.

XIII. THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Having a proper view of God will affect the way a person constructs nearly all of their theological understanding. Some of the distortions we find about God are in two levels. First is a view that He is a “celestial policeman,” looking for an opportunity to jump on anyone who makes a mistake. Even insurance companies have this attitude about God, labeling natural catastrophes as “acts of God.” The second view pictures God as the Grandfatherly type who is kind, old and would never do any harm to humans. Neither level is accurate nor are they biblically correct.

To discover God and His attributes one must go to the Bible. However, even it has some problematic areas about God that need to be sorted out. In the Early Church, the doctrine of Trinity became an issue of debate, but through the course of time it has become pretty well understood as a fact.

As we consider the attributes of God, we are referring to the qualities of God that display His characteristics and His nature. This does not refer to His acts, guiding, preserving or creating activities. Attributes are qualities that include the entire Godhead. They are permanent and intrinsic which cannot be gained or lost and are inseparable from God. These attributes come to our understanding by God’s willingness to reveal Himself as He is.

A. God’s Attributes

There are four different classifications of His attributes:

1. The communicable and incommunicable attributes;

2. The immanent or intransitive and the emanate or transitive (characterized by or involving transition) qualities;

3. The absolute and the relative qualities;

4. The natural and moral attributes.
Erickson takes the fourth concept, natural and moral attributes, and goes into more detail. With some modification he addresses them as the attributes of greatness. These qualities include spirituality, personality, life, infinity, and constancy. In defining spirituality as an attribute of God we must consider the fact that He is Spirit. Jesus stated this, “God is spirit….” (Jn.4:24). He is not composed of matter and has no physical nature, as such. Jesus also made it clear that a spirit has no flesh and bones (Lk.24:39).

B. Personality/Life

The personality of God is indicated in several ways throughout the Bible. His name carries His personality. All Hebrew names were designed to portray a person’s personality. God is viewed in the Bible as a relational Being, which from the earliest of time, in the Garden with Adam and Eve, we are taught has different personality traits. The sense of feeling, knowing, willing and acting describe the personality of God.

God is also characterized by life. Again, His name gives us meaning that life is in existence in God. The writer of Hebrews says that anyone who “…comes to him must believe that he exists…” (He.11:6). However, God's existence is much different from any other life. His existence is not dependent on any other thing or being as we rely. His name, Jehovah, the Jewish national name of God, comes from הָיָה (yeh- ho-vah), meaning “the self Existent or eternal,” also “the Lord.” It is by choice that He relates to us through a’gape, unselfish love, rather than out of any need for it.

C. Infinity

The next attribute of greatness is God’s infinity. He is not only unlimited, but He is not limitable. Everything we as humans experience outside God or in the natural realm has limitations. Energy, time, matter, food or even the disposal of waste and pollution has limits that we cannot avoid because they exist in a finite world; it is not so with God. He is not subject to time, space, knowledge, power, or energy. He is not in any one location nor is His existence anywhere to be found as David stated (Ps.139:7-12). His knowledge is inexhaustible and His power cannot be contained. And finally, His decisions and actions are not determined by any outside factors, but are solely His sovereign choices.

D. Constancy

The last of the attributes of greatness is God’s constancy. He is unchanging in nature as the psalmist declared (Psalms 102). Malachi wrote, “I the Lord do not change” (Mal.3:6). This includes all aspects of God. What we may view as changeable or as inconsistencies or changes may be steps in a process of an overall plan that God had originated before the process ever begun. Things that
may appear to be changes must be viewed within the entire scope of an overall program and theologians need to patiently consider the whole picture before jumping to quick conclusions about the constancy of God.

XIV. THE GOODNESS OF GOD

There are many Scriptures that indicate the goodness of God (Ps.107:1; 31:19; Hos.3:5, etc.). God's goodness is an attribute and foundational truth we all should embrace. It is important to us for several reasons. His goodness is prominent in Genesis 1, as repeatedly God pronounced everything which He created “good” (Ge.1:4, 10, 18; 1Ti.4:4). When things were seen as not good, God fixed them (Ge.2:18-25).

The goodness of God appears to be the sum total of all of God's attributes, described as “LOVE” (Jn.3:16; Ro.8:39; 1Jn.4:8). The goodness of God is thus one facet of His glorious nature and the overall summation of His nature and character. We cannot separate what is good from God. There is no goodness without God, just as we cannot have God without goodness. He alone is good (Ps.16:2).

Besides that, God is the source of everything that is good (Ja.1:17). He does not withhold anything that is truly good from His children (Ps.84:11). While society and our educational system try to separate good from God, the truth is we cannot teach values or morality without teaching about God (1Pe.1:16; Le.11:44).

“Good” is defined in Psalm 73. Asaph composed Psalm 73, which has as its central theme the goodness of God. Asaph underwent a radical change in his understanding of the meaning of the term “good.” His misconception of the meaning of “good” is virtually the same as the typical evangelical Christian today. Asaph had a period in his life when he had serious spiritual struggles. His premise was the goodness of God, particularly His goodness to His own people (73:1). His belief was that the righteous Jew would constantly have the blessing of God while the unrighteous could expect many difficulties. While this is partially true, it is not totally true, as we see in the blessings and cursings (De.28-30).

Asaph admitted that he had strayed far off course and was close to destruction (v.2). As today, his problem was due largely to a distorted perspective. He had been envious of the wicked and self-righteous. He felt he deserved God's blessings (goodness- v.13-14). He viewed his suffering as from God and was consumed with self-pity. Yet his sweeping generalizations, which imply that all the wicked prosper and all the righteous suffer, is somewhat true, but not totally. Because he felt that way, he was considering joining the wicked (vs.10-14). That thought came from a distorted view of God. When he went into the “…sanctuary of God,” he saw from a different vantage point and realized that the wicked had a payday coming for sin (vs.18-20). Then he began to see God for who He is, the One who gives only good things to His children, even though they may have struggles (vs.23-26).
A. Life Transforming Truth

The goodness of God is a life-transforming truth. The goodness of God is a character trait which applies to every other attribute. That means that: 1) God’s wrath is good; 2) God’s holiness is good; 3) God’s righteousness is good. There is nothing God purposes for His children, that is not good and He gives to His children only that which is good. God allows nothing to happen to the Christian that is not good in its end result (Ro.8:28).

We must carefully avoid blaming God when trouble comes, for we know He is good. The enemy is most often behind the trouble we face (Jn.10:10). But at times God uses the trouble we face to accomplish His Sovereign Purpose, such as with Joseph and his brothers who did “evil” to him (Ge.50:20). God was in the arrangements and turned it to good. Paul found this out too, for his “...thorn in the flesh” was for his good too (2Co.12:7-10).

B. The Good News

The Gospel is the “Good News” of God (Is.40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 61:6; Lk.1:19; 2:10; Ac.8:12; 13:32; He.4:2, 6). God is good to all men in His common grace, showering blessings on the wicked and the righteous alike (Mt.5:43-45; Ac.14:16-17). It is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance, and He is particularly good to those who believe in the Gospel.

Nowhere is the goodness of God more evident than in the person of our Lord. In His goodness, God provided a way for sinners to be forgiven and to be declared righteous. It is not by any good works which we do, but on the basis of the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ro.3:19-26; Ti.3:4-7). The goodness of God is a foundational truth that should shape our perspective toward God and His dealings with us in this life. The goodness of God is a fact to which the Bible often testifies and is that which each one is encouraged to believe and embrace. God’s goodness is a perspective through which all of life’s experiences should be viewed. God is summum bonum, “the chiefest good.” All that emanates from God, His decrees, creation, laws, providences are good; they cannot be otherwise, for it is written, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Ge.1:31).

XV. GOD’S SPECIAL AGENTS

Many theologians admit the topic of angels is difficult and most unusual, and some prefer not to deal with it. They feel God could have operated the doctrines of creation and providence without the use of angels. Though angels are mentioned numerous times in the Scriptures, there is little said or known about their development and understanding.
A. Changed Views

The doctrine of angels has varied more throughout history than any other doctrine. At times it has been mishandled, overstated, exaggerated and sensationalized. Second century theologians treated them as deity, while medieval Christianity developed theories about the classes of angels (each enlightening the other class). By the 17th century, Luther and other scholars argued that angels existed because there were no gaps in nature. Rudolf Bultmann maintained that angels no longer existed. He claimed scientific and medical knowledge advancements proved bacteria was behind sickness instead of demons, and that the New Testament writers believed in myths.

A resurgence of teaching concerning angels resurfaced in the last part of the 20th century. The fascination with occultism and New Age teaching has spurred a new enthusiasm into angelology. The current interests have been good and bad as the Church reexamines an old doctrine.

B. Good Angels

The word “angels” comes from angelos in the Greek New Testament and mal’ak in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Both words mean “messenger”. Sometimes they refer to human characters and at others times to supernatural beings. Scripture refers to them as created beings (Ps.148:2, 5). It would seem that they came into being all at one time, since they have no way to reproduce. Some scholars believe angels were part of the six days of creation in Genesis. They use Genesis 2:1 and Job 38:7 as proof. In actuality we have no conclusive proof.

Most Christians and Jews have long taught that angels are spirit beings and have the ability to appear in human form. They have been referred to as demons (fallen angels), and are sexless as taught by Jesus. The writer of Hebrews said Jesus was made human, and was as we are, a “...little lower than the angels” (He.2:9). The Hebrew word aggelos was used here, translated as angels, indicating they have more physical power than human beings yet are not omnipotent. Angels have much knowledge but are not omniscient.

B. Angel’s Activities

Angels continually praise God. Their activities on earth reveal and communicate God’s message to man. They minister to believers and some believe they are sent to be guardian angels, although there is insufficient scriptural evidence to settle this claim. Angels often executed judgment on God’s enemies (2Kg.19:35). Angels are at man’s command, when he speaks the Word of God in faith (Ps.103:20).
XVI. THE CONSTITUTIONAL NATURE OF MAN

In considering the makeup of man, Erickson stresses his concern about the incorporation of Greek philosophy into Christian theology. Dualism was common in the ancient Greek culture and some theologians think it is in Biblical linguistics.

A. Trichotomous Human Constitution

The first view of the human construction, which is held by many conservative Protestants, is trichotomous. The view expresses three elements of the human being: body, soul and spirit. A principle Scripture used is, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Th.5:23). Hebrews 4:12 describes God’s Word as the element that divides the “…soul and spirit, joints and marrow,” yet Erickson points out inconsistencies in Paul’s writings in regard to the usage of the words. Therefore, he says it cannot be used to prove the trichotomous existence of man. He develops his theory from 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:44. He parallels this with the Greek philosophers who taught that the body is the material part of man and the soul is the unseen or immaterial part of man.

B. Dichotomous Human Constitution

This second view was probably the earliest held view by the Church, which goes back to the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. This position is probably the most widely held view throughout the history of the Church and is still widely accepted. Though most of the arguments for dichotomous existence (man being two parts), are against trichotomous existence, the principle references are the same. This position teaches that it is not possible to separate the spirit from the soul because the Scripture uses the terms interchangeably. One of the verses quoted is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Lk.10:27). The claim is that four entities are used rather than three and they do not match any of the other Scriptures. Again, Erickson points to Greek philosophy which used human reasoning to justify their answers.

C. Monistic Human Construction

The third view is monism, which insists that humans are a radical unity. Monists teach that since the Bible does not speak of humans in a dualistic form, they should be a unit. The examples they use is that when a person dies, we do not read in the Bible that just his body died, but that his being, as a unit, died.

Erickson points to A.T. Robinson, a renowned Greek scholar, who maintained that there are no Hebrew words for body that are equivalent to the Greek word soma (body). Robinson said that Paul’s usage of anthropology is to be viewed in respect...
to the Hebrew language and its assumptions about humans. He maintained the Hebrew language made no distinction between the body, soul and spirit, therefore the New Testament Greek must comply with the standard established in the Old Testament.

The view that Erickson presents is his personal position, called “conditional unity.” This position considers humans as a materialized unitary being. Erickson believes it is more in line with Scripture in the aspect that it allows humans not to look at the body as evil. He claims people should not always be trying to flee the body, but at death it gives room for the soul and spirit to leave the body and then reunite at the resurrection. At that time it will return to a material or corporeal condition. That new body will be a perfect body after the rapture or resurrection for the believer.

XVII. THE NATURE OF SIN

The doctrine of sin is important because it affects the way we view the nature of God. If God is holy and pure and expects His subjects to be as He is, then mankind is in serious trouble due to deviations from His standard. On the other hand, if God is pictured as the grandfatherly type, then He would be unconcerned about the conditions of mankind. So, in the light that we view sin, it reflects our view of the doctrine of God.

Our view of sin also affects our view of humanity. If our opinion of humanity is to reflect the nature of God, then sin could cause us not to be a true representative. We may also consider humanity as free agents, not being under the forces of nature; so then sin may or may not interfere with our outcome according to our view. Obviously our view of salvation and the way we understand it would also be affected by the way we view the doctrine of sin. This will affect our style of ministry and the way we deal with humanity and society as a whole.

The doctrine of sin is not popular in social circles and will be avoided as much as possible. People do not want to hear that they are corrupt, deceitful, promiscuous, etc., which emphasizes their negative ways; rather, they want a pat on the back with a positive statement and an expression of approval. Even some of the "church" has taken on this same attitude, as expressed by self-help sermons and the refusal of many pastors to address the “sin problem.”

A. Terms for Sin

There are several ways to study the doctrine of sin, but the way Erickson has chosen is by terminology which will be broken down into three areas. First we will consider the terms emphasizing the causes of sin.

1. Ignorance;

A New Testament Greek word commonly used is agnoia which is comparable to the English word agnostic or “not to know.” It is comparable
to the Hebrew word *shagah* and *shagag*. This word has to do with error in ignorance. These errors still carry the liability of punishment according to Scripture.

2. **Error;**

The English word error appears to be taken more from the New Testament Greek word *planao* that emphasizes “going astray because of deception”, while the Old Testament Hebrew word remains the same as ignorance.

3. **Inattention;**

In classical Greek the word for inattention is *parakoe*, meaning “to hear amiss” or “incorrectly” and a similar New Testament word is *parakouo* meaning to “refuse to listen” or “ignore.” When God speaks it is best to listen, otherwise it is sin.

**B. Recognizing Sin’s Character**

Another important factor is the ability to recognize the terms that emphasize the character of the sin. This group of words for sin is so serious in character that it makes little difference why they occur or what prompts the individual to commit them.

1. **Missing the mark;**

The most common phrase that stresses the nature of sin is “missing the mark”. In the New Testament the Greek word is *hamartia* and in the Old it is *chata*. In the Hebrew in all its forms, the word appears about 600 times. The phrase “missing the mark” would appear to describe a mistake rather than a deliberate action, but in Hebrew language it is a consciously chosen sin. In the New Testament it seems to refer to that which actually occurs rather than one’s motivation for aiming wrong.

2. **Irreligion;**

The Greek word *sebo* means “to worship” or “to reverence,” but the prefix “a” negates the word; thus the word “irreligious”. Another comparable word used the same way is *dike* meaning “righteous” with an “a” as a prefix forming the word *adikia* or *adikeo*, which means “the absence of righteous” or “not righteous.”
3. Transgression;

This Hebrew word equivalent *abar* appears over 600 times in the Old Testament. It means “to cross over” or “to pass by.” The closest Greek word to its meaning is *parabaino* and its noun form *parabasis*.

4. Iniquity or lack of integrity;

The Hebrew word translated iniquity is *awal*. It carries the basic concept of “deviation from a right course.” It is close to lack of integrity and carries the idea of “failing to fulfill.”

5. Rebellion;

The most common Hebrew word for rebellion is *pasha* and in the noun form *pesha* means “to rebel.” Its counterpart in the Greek is *apeitheia*, *apeitheo* or *apeithes*. This word is used 29 times in phrases such as, “disobedience to parents” or “disobedience to God.” Two other words that convey the idea of rebellion are *apahistemi* and *apostasia* which are often translated “falling away.”

6. Treachery;

This word is closely related to rebellion, but it has to do with the “breach of trust.” It carries the idea of a traitor and was considered very serious because of what has been violated.

7. Perversion;

The word perversion conveys the meaning “to bend” or “twist” and comes from the Hebrew word *awah*. It unfolds from the Garden of Eden where mankind was created to be in the image and likeness of God, but this image was twisted in the fall.

8. Abomination;

Abomination was most often translated from the Hebrew word *shiqquts* and *to’ebah*, meaning “that which is reprehensible to God.” These are practices that are so repulsive that it is nauseating to God.

C. Results of Sin

Now we look at terms emphasizing the results of sin. These terms focus on the results of sin rather than the nature or the act.
1. Agitation or restlessness;

The common word for this is *resha* meaning “wickedness.” It is related to the Arabic word meaning “to be loose (of limb),” or “to be disjointed, ill regulated, abnormal or wicked.”

2. Evil or badness;

The Hebrew word *ra* is a generic term meaning “evil in the sense of badness.” It may be used as food that has gone bad or for a dangerous animal.

3. Guilt;

This is a word that is translated from the Hebrew word *asham*. It means “to do wrong, to commit an offense, or to inflict an injury.” It is closely related to the same word that is translated for sin offering which carries the idea of restitution. In the Hebrew thinking, punishment was inseparable from sin.

4. Trouble;

This word means what it says. It comes from the Hebrew word *aven*. The word carries the idea that sin brings trouble; “*He who sows wickedness reaps trouble*” (Pr.22:8).

In looking at the final aspect of this chapter we want to consider the essential nature of sin. Sin is not just doing wrong acts. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. The important distinction here is in the suffix, “er”, indicating “one who practices.” In defining sin Erickson says, “Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of thought, or of inner disposition or state.” He does not believe that sensuality or selfishness is the root of sin, but the failure to acknowledge God as God.

### XVIII. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Beginning in the Old Testament we see progressive revelation brought about by the Holy Spirit. The term “Holy Spirit” is not normally used in the Old Testament, but He is usually referred to as the “Spirit of God.” The English language is quite different from Hebrew in the usage of nouns and adjectives. The Hebrew has a tendency to use two nouns to function as the genitive case, but in English we would use an adjective and a noun together, therefore the “Spirit of God” is equivalent to “Holy Spirit.”

We are first introduced to the Holy Spirit at creation in the opening verses of Genesis, where “…the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters…” (Ge.1:2). As God continued His creation we also see the continuing work of the Holy Spirit.
Next in Scripture, we see the Holy Spirit operating through the prophets. Peter reminded us that “…prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men from God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe.1:21). Ezekiel said, “As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me” (Ezk.2:2; see also 8:3; 11:1, 24).

The Holy Spirit enabled men to work in the Tabernacle. Bezaleel was given skills and knowledge in crafts and artistic design to work with gold, silver and bronze, in setting stones and in carving wood, etc. (Ex.31:3-5). In Zerubbabel’s day the Holy Spirit also worked through men to rebuild the Temple (Zec.4:6).

The Holy Spirit was/is active in administration skills. When Moses was over burdened in leading Israel, at the prompting of his father-in-law, he selected leaders and the Spirit imparted special leadership skills to them. During the time of the Judges we see the Holy Spirit working through them, empowering them to lead and judge. This is the first time we read about the Spirit coming upon them; “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him…” (Jg.3:10).

A. At Work in the Life of Jesus

The Holy Spirit was not only active in the prophecies of Jesus but also in the conception of Jesus. Starting with the introduction of John the Baptist, he was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb and was to make way for the Messiah. John’s whole family was unique because they were the first family of the Gospels to experience the in-filling of the Holy Spirit. This was an Old Testament event that became the New Testament phenomena.

When Jesus was baptized, He was filled with the Spirit “…without measure” to do the work of the One who sent Him. After being baptized, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil where He overcame all of Satan’s deceptions. His entire ministry depended on the Holy Spirit to empower Him to do miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Though He was yet God, yet He laid down His divinity to relate to man (Php.2:6-8). In His death He depended on the Spirit to raise Him up on the third day.

B. Holy Spirit’s Work in the Christian

For the believer, the Holy Spirit is present for conversion. He begins by calling us to repentance and then performs regeneration. He is always there to empower, counsel, illuminate, guide, sanctify, teach and eventually raise us from the dead. Since the Day of Pentecost He has taken up residency in believers. While some struggle with the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Charismatic view, Holy Spirit is in the believer to empower to witness and He brings His gifts for the benefit of man. Those gifts will be in operation until Jesus returns (1Co.1:7).
XIX. CONCEPTS OF SALVATION

There are numerous views that differ on the five basic concepts of salvation. Beginning with the time dimension, we see some proclaiming it complete at initiation, while some think of it as a process and others view it as a future event. The Greek language, however, makes no specifications as to the time involved, only that it must begin in time and be complete at the conclusion of time.

The nature and locus of the need is the second thing to consider. The traditional view describes man’s basic deficiency, being separated from God by violation of God’s will or sin. Others see it as a fundamental deficiency among people who lack harmony within society.

The medium of salvation is the third question that needs to be resolved. Some view it as a physical process and declare that grace is transferred by the sacraments (Roman Catholic). Still others believe it is transmitted in the social gospel and in liberation theology. Evangelicals follow the belief that salvation is mediated by faith appropriated by Christ.

The fourth consideration is the direction of the movement in salvation. At the turn of the 21st century it was common to believe that the basic human need was not in our sinful nature but in an evil social environment. The other side of the approach stressed conversion and that the evil society was a result of sinful nature. While some think salvation applies to individuals rather than society, others hold to the view that man will be restored in God and no one will be lost (Universalist).

The last concept to consider is the object of salvation. Some hold to the view that only human beings, individually and collectively, are to be saved and the rest of creation is the stage for this drama to be worked out. The alternative view maintains that salvation has cosmic dimensions of salvation and both humans and the cosmos (universe) are affected by sin. According to this view restoration will include both man and all creation (Ro.8:18-25).

A. Current Concepts of Salvation

There are basically five concepts or theologies of salvation.

1. Liberation theology;

This movement is commonly divided into “black, feminist, and Third World.” The movement plays on the exploitation of the oppressed. Salvation is appropriated by the deliverance or liberation of the underprivileged. The proponents of it primarily use the Book of Exodus, sighting Israel in bondage by the Egyptians. They also point to the captivity of Israel under the Assyrians and the Babylonians to prove their views. They propose every
means possible including politics and revolution to bring about social change.

2. Existential theology;

This is based on and constructed from existential philosophy. Varying in degrees, most of the 20th century theologians have incorporated it into their doctrines. The first tenet is based on the distinction between objective and subjective knowledge. Objective knowledge is pursued by natural science to describe or analyze as accurately as possible while subjective knowledge is not concerned with accuracy, but the object signified. Relating it to ourselves, one might say objective knowledge gives us information about the body, but does not deal with our real self. They declare the Bible not to be the source of objective knowledge that deals with man’s actions or events, but subjective knowledge that deals with the effects of these occurrences on man. Its goal is not to inform, but to transform.

3. Secular theology;

Secular theology advocates a changing theology. It accepts evolution and in times past pointed out that when people needed healing they turned toward God, but now they go to doctors. The proponents declare the human race has now come to age and has the ability to deal with problems without any supernatural aid. One of its early leading defenders was Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

4. Contemporary Roman Catholic theology;

For a long time the Roman Church presented grace as being transmitted by the sacraments of the church and anyone outside the church could not receive it. Now the traditional view states the church is the channel of salvation and anyone outside the church who sincerely desires it God will accept them. The present stand includes many dimensions that were formally identified with Protestantism.

5. Evangelical theology;

This theology views the Bible as identifying two human problems of sin. Sin causes separation from God and the nature of a person is tarnished due to disobedience. The aspects of salvation involve justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. This is the view held as the most correct.

X. PREDESTINATION

The historical development of the doctrine of predestination has taken numerous turns during the previous centuries as societies, cultures and the Church has developed.
Augustine had a considerable influence in its early stages and began by insisting that Adam had begun life truly free. When he (Adam) sinned, by choice, his tainted nature was passed on to his descendants, since he was the “federal head” of humanity; thus the freedom to abstain from evil was lost. According to this view man is now unable to choose to do good without God’s help.

A. Pelagianism

A British monk by the name of Pelagius, who was more of a moralist than a theologian, claimed that people live as virtuously as possible and considered Augustine’s view on corruption extreme, demoralizing and an insult to God. He believed man’s freedom of choice is a gift from God and it should be used to fulfill God’s purposes. In fact he taught that each person born has no bias toward evil and Adam’s fall had no effect on a person’s ability to do good. He felt that God did not influence people to do good and that grace is divided equally among everyone. Pelagius also believed a person’s progression in holiness was on the basis of merit. Though he did not teach it, a doctrine was formed out of this which concluded that a person could live without sin.

This caused Augustine to expand his view of predestination by claiming all of us were in Adam, therefore all were participants in his sin. Since Adam lost his liberty not to sin and by his failure we lost that same liberty, it would/will take God’s special grace to assist us to do good. This was not to say man is not free to choose, but that man’s choices are sinful in nature. He claimed man always had free will, but our choices to do good rest on God granting our freedom. Augustine continued to maintain that God’s grace was given to some but not others.

B. Double-Predestination

After Augustine’s death a more mild form of his doctrine prevailed until the 9th century, when Gottschalk introduced “double predestination”. He maintained that predestination should apply to the elect as well as the lost. His views were condemned by a synod of bishops at Maiz in 848 where Johannes Scotus Erigena charged him with heresy. However, Erigena did agree with him on one issue, predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge of what man will do.

C. Free Will

Anselm recognized Augustine’s position of free will, but contended a person who does right is freer than a person who does wrong, saying that the wrong-doer became a slave to sin. This view was kept alive from the 11th through the 13th century. Thomas Aquinas sided in with Augustine, adding a distinction between God’s general will (all will be saved) and His special will (electing some and rejecting others).
From the 12th century until the Reformation, Catholic theologians drifted toward Pelagianism while Wycliffe and Bradwardine did not follow that traditional view. Luther spoke out against God’s foreknowledge based on worthiness making it a major issue. He also aliened very close to John Calvin’s view. Luther insisted that all of Augustine’s view on predestination was derived from the flesh.

D. Arminianism

John Wesley came along in the 18th century, making Arminianism very popular. He added “prevenient grace” or grace based on foreknowledge of human good to the doctrine. This grace prior to salvation was to make it possible for salvation.

E. Differing Views of Predestination

1. Calvinism;

Calvinism has taken different forms since its conception, but that main view of predestination is as follows:

   a. The entire human race is viewed as lost in sin. Man is considered so demoralized that he cannot even respond to grace;

   b. The phrase “total inability” is used to describe man’s inability to convert self. Their view on the sovereignty of God leaves man totally at His mercy without any free will at all;

   c. Calvinists say that election is God having favorite people whom He chooses to be saved. Some Calvinists hold to double predestination meaning God also chooses some to be lost. They also vary on the views on whether the atonement was for everyone or a select few.

2. Arminianism;

Arminianism is the opposing view of Calvinism, but with many variations. It covers a wide range of adherents, from left-wing liberals to conservative evangelicals. The main thrust of their view describes man as being sinful and unable to do good without God’s help. Many extreme liberals feel that sin is not important and therefore man does not need to be regenerated, while Roman Catholics believe works are a part of the salvation process.

The second Armenian belief maintains that everyone is able to meet the requirements for salvation. They primarily agree that prevenient grace is available to everyone indiscriminately. Their view of election is according to
God’s foreknowledge and therefore foreordination is derived from what God already knew. This gives place to man’s free will.

3. Reformed theology;

A Reformed theologian by the name of Karl Barth attempted to lessen the extremes of Calvinism. He claimed the approach must begin with the doctrine of Christology. He placed Christ in the center of God’s timetable and the doctrine of election was not to reject anyone. Barth viewed double predestination as Christ being both the election of God and the election of man. He says all are elected but some do not live in the election.

F. A Possible Solution

There is no simple solution to the question of election. The Scriptures deal with it in different ways. The Greek word *proorizdo* refers to predetermining or fixing beforehand and it occurs in relation to ultimate destiny. Paul pointed out, especially in Romans 3, that humanity is lost, separated from God, and blind in their dilemma. Both the Calvinists and conservative Armenians agree that spiritual blindness (Ro.1:18-23; 2Co.4:3-4) is their condition. Paul also makes it clear that both Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners (Ro.3:9-11). Armenians recognize that God’s grace is needed for salvation. Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day*” (Jn.6:44). He also said, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you*” (Jn.15:16). Jesus made the calling or election all-inclusive by saying, “*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away*” (Jn.6:37). Without going into explicit details of the language, we can conclude that God’s calling is universal and without merit. The rest of the New Testament also brings out the same conclusions.

Although the debates between Calvinism and Arminianism have not and will not be easily settled, a pastor will need to continue to search the Scriptures and be completely open to hear the voice of the Lord for the answers. One thing we do know, God is “…*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2Pe.3:9).

XXI. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The Church is one of the most misunderstood topics that is discussed today. Some of this confusion is due to the different usages of the term “church.” It is frequently referred to as a structure or a building, sometimes as a denomination, and other times as a group of people. Yet the Biblical usage of the term is always as an assembly of people, with or without a building.

There has been much debate on how to examine the theology of the Christian Church. Some place emphasis on social change and mission, claiming that change is necessary to
meet the needs, while others believe this will lead to an altered conception of its nature and means of salvation. In the 20th century a popular trend has been to shift to philosophy and metaphysics in place of historical manifestations. That has caused some modern theologians to become less interested in the essence of the Church- that is, "what it is" or "ought to be" - than in the dynamics of what it is becoming.

In defining the doctrines of the Church we need to go back to the original languages. The most understood word for church in the New Testament is *ekklesia* meaning, “called out ones.” It is relevant in the Old Testament and used by the Septuagint, thus bringing the same meaning of the Church throughout the Bible. Even more to consider is that many New Testament Scriptures are quotes from the Old Testament which bring special emphasis on the Church’s existence in the Old Testament. God’s expectation of Israel was that they should be pure and holy. That corresponds with the Bride of Christ, “the Church” of the New Testament. It becomes rather apparent that the Church, the “called out ones,” is universal in nature and includes all who have become part of the Body of Christ. The Old Testament saints have accepted Him by faith in His first coming and the New Testament saints by faith in Him after His first coming.

A. Biblical Image of the Church

There are three images of the Church that are vividly brought to our attention by Paul’s writings. In his letters he presents the Church as “…the people of God”, the “…body of Christ” and the “…temple of the Holy Spirit.”

1. People of God;

As “…the people of God” we see several implications brought to our attention. We have Israel and the Church looked upon by God, taking pride in them. He cares for and protects them, and on the other hand God expects them to be loyal without any divided reservation.

2. Body of Christ;

The most extended image of the Church is the Body of Christ. Many offer this image as the complete definition of the Church. It may be full of understanding, but it is not complete. This image pictures Christ’s physical body during His earthly ministry. It connects the Church as a group of believers with Him. He is the Head of many individual people or diversified parts, working together in unity, to carry out the Great Commission.

3. Temple of the Holy Spirit;

Paul’s third image is the Church presented as “…the temple of Holy Spirit.” The dwelling place of the Holy Spirit is where God imparts His life which is now the Church. He also manifests His gifts to bring edification and holiness.
there. Most of all, He expects this Temple to be as sacred as the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament.

B. Special Problems

There are four special problems that need to be dealt with in regard to the doctrine of the Church.

1. Church and the Kingdom;

Some would argue that the imagery of Matthew (16:18) presents the Church as the foundation and that the keys to the “house” would be turned over to Peter. George Ladd, a noted theologian for his views on the Kingdom, stresses that this is pressing the metaphorical language too far. He argues that the Kingdom is the rule of God and the Church is the human community under that rule. In other words it is a manifestation of the Kingdom, but not the Kingdom.

2. Church and Israel;

The question then arises, does the Church replace Israel? No, Israel is Israel and the Church is the Church and prophecies are to be fulfilled concerning both. However, the Church occupies the place in the New Covenant that Israel did in the Old Testament and Israel’s salvation today can only come through Christ and entry into the Church.

3. Visible church and invisible Church;

The third problem is between the visible church and the invisible Church. A distinction between the two must be recognized because it is possible to be a member of a local church and not actually be in the Body of Christ. While acknowledging this distinction, it is important that we understand that it is God’s plan for the two to become identical.

4. Inception of the Church;

Berkhof, among others, refers to the Church during the time of the Patriarchs and at the time of Moses. Even Jesus refers to the Church twice in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). The latter is definitely future, when He says, “I will build my church”, while the first time is present tense. Luke, however, never mentions the Church in his Gospel, but uses it 24 times in Acts. Therefore, it likely should be our conclusion that the Church began on the Day of Pentecost and did not exist before that time (an orthodox belief).
XXII. BAPTISM

Baptism is the initiatory rite of the Church. Both Lutherans and Catholics view baptism as a means of saving grace and the act of baptism conveys this to the person. It is referred to as “baptismal regeneration.” The Lutheran position is different from the Catholic in that they hold to the aspect of grace being conferred to the person by baptism, while the Catholic maintain that baptism confers grace to the person or that God is the doer, not the person. Romans 6:1-11 is viewed then as man being united with Christ rather than a picture of the death and resurrection of Him. They use Matthew 18:16-17, which speaks of “…one of these little ones who believe in me” (also 19:14; Mk.10:14; Lk.18:16-17), to support the doctrine. As further proof, they take Luke 1:15, referring to John the Baptist who was “…filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth,” to include children into baptism.

A. Sign & Seal of Covenant

Baptism, as a sign and seal of the New Covenant, is the second view and is held by the Reformed and Presbyterians. They tie this in to the Old Testament concept of covenant and believe this is how God is working out His established Covenant in the human race. They also hold to the view that children are to be included in baptism and point out Abraham and his seed, which included children. Since children were present when the Covenant was renewed (De.29:10-13), and present when Joshua read the writings of Moses (Jos.8:35) as well (2Ch.20:13; Joel 2:16), they contend that children should be included in baptism.

The key to their stand on infant baptism and Covenant is found in circumcision which was the sign of the Old Testament Covenant God cut with Moses. According to the New Testament (Ac.15:1-2; 21:21; Ga.2:3-5; 5:2-6; 6:12-15), circumcision has been replaced by baptism and Paul specifically refers to circumcision by Christ as baptism (Co.2:11-12). This view of baptism focuses on purification and takes into account immersion, pouring, and sprinkling.

B. Token of Change

The third view of baptism pictures it as a token or symbol of an inward change and serves as a public testimony of faith. According to this, it does not convey any spiritual benefit or blessing. The words of John the Baptist are pointed out when he referred to the Pharisees and Sadducees as “…you brood of vipers” because they were not producing “…fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Mt.3:7-8).

C. Resolving the Issues

A closer examination of the Scripture will help us determine what baptism is and what it means. Mark 16:16 says, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” This does not say in the second half about a person not being baptized.
Another common verse used to support baptismal regeneration is John 3:5, “…no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” However, taking this in context with the following verses it is clear that it is not speaking about water baptism. Jesus explained that two things are essential for the new birth, the natural (flesh, which is brought into this world by the water of the womb), and the supernatural (Spirit).

The third passage is 1 Peter 3:21. It says that “…water symbolizes baptism that now saves.” But it only saves in that “…the pledge of a good conscience toward God” is present, as stated in the second part of the verse. This means a person must be of an accountable age. The Book of Acts often ties baptism with belief.

There are a number of passages that speak to household salvation, but little Biblical evidence will support regeneration as a channel of grace. One should consider the thief on the cross who Jesus assured would be in paradise with Him.

What about circumcision being replaced by baptism? Paul said a true Jew is one who is circumcised in the heart, not by the natural, external circumcision. That places circumcision as the less, being replaced by the greater (baptism). Nearly all the 1st and 2nd century writings refer to baptism by submersion. Even the Greek word baptizo means “to dip” or “submerge.” There may have been people baptized by sprinkling or pouring which was later introduced by the Roman Catholic Church to accommodate those who were physically unable, but the most common practice of the early Christians was submersion.

Whatever mode of baptism is employed, it should not be taken lightly. It is both a sign of the believer’s union with Christ and a confession of that union made by faith. It then seals the believer more firmly until salvation is complete.

XXIII. ESCHATOLOGY

Traditionally, eschatology has been referred to as the study of “last things.” It deals with the questions concerning the consummation of history and the completion of the working of God in the world. Theologians consider it as the last chapter in theology. In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, eschatology had become more of a centerpiece in consideration by the Church. A number of reasons had brought that trend into play, with the main reason being the rapid expansion of technology. This has produced communication, travel, and a need for businesses and people to want to know more about the future. Also, the development of countries and the alignment of the nations have played a part. This has caused people to be concerned about the future in regards to the Biblical perspective and has introduced the fear of the possibility of complete destruction.
A. Trends Produced

Two trends have been produced as a result of theologians and ministers examining eschatology.

1. Eschatomania.

This is a term brought about by those who read the newspapers and/or listen to the news and interpret current events as eschatology. This would include those who are currently fearful of the Mayan Calendar, which supposedly ended at December 21, 2012. (However, as this was being written/edited on that particular day, the world has not “ended” and will not by the knowledge of men, “…for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mt.25:13).

2. Eschatophobia

This has to do with those who fear or avoid eschatology. Yet there must be a balance somewhere between these two extremes that express the words of Paul, “Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1Th.4:18). Eschatology was intended by God to be a comfort.

B. Classification of Eschatologies

There are four main variations of the eschatological view: 1) futuristic- maintaining that all of the events are in the future, mostly in clusters at the end of the age; 2) preterist- believing the events actually took place the same time they were written; 3) historical- holding that eschatology is happening during the history of the Church; 4) symbolic or idealist- describing eschatological events as not related to a time sequence, but refer to them as timeless in nature, not as a single historical occurrence.

C. Modern Treatments of Eschatology

The history of eschatology, in many ways, can be paralleled to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; both have generated tremendous interest in the 20th century. There are several people involved in the modern development of eschatology.

1. Modernized Eschatology;

There is the Liberal Approach or Modernized Eschatology. During the 19th century, the ideas of evolution and the expansion of scientific technology influenced Christian theology. Many liberal theologians were caught up in modernized eschatology and taught that Jesus’ teaching on the Second Coming was rather strange. They held to the view that the role of Christianity was only to spread the Kingdom.
2. De-modernized Eschatology;

De-modernized Eschatology then came along taking a half historical and half modern view of Jesus’ teaching. They felt the future Kingdom would be radical and supernatural in its coming. This view was developed by Albert Schweitzer who believed the future heavenly Kingdom was at the root of Jesus’ teaching ministry.

3. Realized Eschatology;

C.H. Dodd introduced Realized Eschatology which was similar to Schweitzer’s views, but leaned heavily on the idea that the New Testament writers saw the end-times as having already occurred.

4. Existential Eschatology;

Rudolf Bultmann introduced Existential Eschatology, which considered the New Testament writer’s expressions as myths.

5. Politicized Eschatology;

Next was Jurgen Moltmann who introduced Politicized Eschatology or the theology of hope. He developed it with the idea that a political transformation would change the world.

6. Dispensational Eschatology;

Dispensationalism or Systematized Eschatology attempts to categorize the Church and Israel and established the theory that God would deal with them individually.

There are nine points that bring balance to the extremes that many theologians advocate in this area: a) Eschatology is an important part of systematic theology, but one must not convert the entire doctrinal system into it; b) Eschatology must be carefully studied, but a person’s curiosity should not obscure the whole of God’s Word; c) We need to recognize that eschatology does not exclusively pertain to the future; d) We need to understand that not all predictive prophecy is fulfilled and we should remain open, anticipating the future; e) Understand that Biblical passages are more existential in the descriptions of life and they will come true; f) The Kingdom of God will be ushered in supernaturally, but we as humans will play a part in the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy; g) We should not be misled by circumstances or difficult times, but let the eschatological truths move us; h) Place emphasis on the points of agreement and not on disagreement; i) Stress the spiritual significance and practical application regarding eschatology as a resource for ministry, not a topic to debate.
XXIV. INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY

Theologians make two distinctions in eschatology. They place the individual’s future and what occurs to them, mainly death, and its consequences as individual eschatology. The second distinction is cosmic (having to do with the world or universe) eschatology. This will affect all people collectively and simultaneously in the future.

Every theologian and all people in general recognize as a fact of eschatology that death awaits every man. The Scriptures indicate that “It is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment” (He.9:27). Even though death has been defeated and the sting removed for the Believer, there is no suggestion in Scripture that death has been eliminated in this dispensation.

Although the Christian Scientists denied the reality of death, they too had to come to its recognition when their founder Mary Baker Eddy died. Most people are unwilling to face death and want to back away from the thoughts of it. Even funeral homes refer to people as “passing away” or “expiring” and graveyards as “memorials parks,” while many in the Church now call the week of Christ’s death “Passion Week.” But in spite of it all, death is real and the Scripture says, “For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you” (2Co.4:11-12).

To define death we need to consider what the Scripture says about the different kinds of death. Some passages indicate there is a physical death, meaning the death of the body, while others speak of the death of the spirit and still others address eternal death. Since our focus in this chapter is on physical death, we will deal only with that. Ecclesiastes 12:7 in the Old Testament and James 2:26 in the New Testament refer to death as separation of the soul from the body.

Theologians have long debated whether man was originally created mortal or immortal. Man would have lived forever had he not sinned, so he was created immortal, but when man sinned and did not eat of the Tree of Life he became subject to death. This is also seen in the fact that scientists remark that they do not know why a human body should die, since it replaces its cells on a regular basis. To keep man from being eternally lost with no possibility of redemption, God set the angel at the entrance of the Garden, lest Adam partake of the Tree of Life after the fall and be eternally lost in his sin.

A. The Intermediate State

The intermediate state refers to the time between death and the resurrection. Only a few Scriptures address this area, but some different well-known views have obscured the subject. They are “soul sleep” and “purgatory.”
1. Soul sleep;

The “soul sleep” theory was begun by the Anabaptists and Socinians and was picked up later by the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They view the soul as sleeping or becoming non-existent after death. Part of the problem with this theory is that if the soul would become non-existent after death, it would be impossible to identify people in heaven.

2. Purgatory;

Purgatory is a Roman Catholic doctrine that teaches the soul of the righteous goes immediately into a holding place, because it is not holy enough to meet God, while the soul of a wicked person would go directly to hell. Catholics contend that Hebrews 9:27 teaches judgment will occur after the death of the righteous while they remain in a temporary state. This is referred to as the immediate state, where punishment is administered until their wickedness is removed.

Involved with this, two views have surfaced within the Catholic Church over the years. Joseph Pohle believed the immediate state is the place of grace where venial sins (those not seriously wrong) are cleansed. He says that everyone sooner or later will be transferred into heaven. Thomas Aquinas pictured purgatory as a place that was connected with hell where penal suffering took place for venial sin.

The Catholic Church’s stand on forgiveness while in the intermediate state can occur in three ways: a) By an unconditional forgiveness due to God’s sovereignty; b) By the performance of penitential works; by the living believers and/or the one in purgatory; c) By the contributions of the one who dies by leaving money or by the living who bring contributions to the church.

B. Apocryphal Books

Other scriptures heavily used to formulate this doctrine are found in Apocryphal Books, which are not in the cannon of Scriptures and not accepted as inspired books by Protestants. However, they do use the words of Jesus when He said, “Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Mt.12:32).

Some of the problems with this doctrine are based on works that take away from the grace of God and the atonement of Christ. This is clearly brought out in many teachings of the Scripture (Ga.3:1-14; Ep.2:8-9). Matthew has to be stretched to make the inference introduced by the proponents of this doctrine and in no way can be used to prove sin is forgiven after death (12:32). There is a judgment after
death as Hebrews indicates, but that judgment does not deal with an intermediate state (9:27).

C. Instantaneous Resurrection

Another view that has been introduced in recent years is referred to as instantaneous resurrection. This belief teaches that upon death the believers instantaneously receive the resurrection body as Paul teaches (1Co.15). This view is not consistent with Paul's other teachings (Php.3:20-21; 1Th.4:16-17; Ro.2:3-16; 1Co.4:5, etc.), and is cleared up by proper understanding of the Greek language.

D. Truth

To make a clear determination concerning the views stated and establish the doctrine of death, there are several things to consider.

1. The New Testament distinguishes between Gehenna and Hades. Hades is the holding place of torment for the unrighteous awaiting the final judgment and the reuniting of their body and soul; after that judgment they will be forever cast into Gehenna and face eternal punishment.

2. The New Testament indicates the righteous will not descend into Hades (Mt.16:18-19; Ac.2:31).

3. The righteous souls are received into paradise (Lk.16:19-31; 23:43).

4. Paul says to be “...absent from the body” is to be present with the Lord (2Co.5:1-10).

From this we can conclude that death is inevitable for everyone, except for the believers that are alive when the Lord returns in the air only, known as the “rapture” or catching away (1st resurrection). During the intermediate state, the believers will be ushered immediately into the presence of the Lord, and the unbelievers will be taken immediately into Hell. We can also conclude that in the present age and after death, only God's grace is the basis for our relationship.

The hermeneutic method held by an individual or church will greatly affect their interpretation of the Book of Revelation, and consequently their eschatological scheme. Super-sessionalism is the belief that the New Covenant in Christ supersedes, or replaces, the Old Covenant with Israel. It comes in at least two forms: 1) Covenant theology; 2) Kingdom theology. It was the predominant teaching of the Church until the rise of Dispensationalism in the 19th century.
XXV. RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The word “rapture” does not occur in the Bible. The concept of the rapture, though, is clearly taught in Scripture. The rapture or catching away of the Church includes the living believers at the time of the event as well as the resurrected saints from the grave. It is when God calls away from the earth His children in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the Tribulation Period (some teach Mid-Tribulation here). The rapture is described primarily by Paul (1Th.4:13-18; 1Co.15:50-54). God will resurrect all believers who have died, give them glorified bodies, and take them from the earth, along with those believers who are still alive and who will at that time also be given glorified bodies. “For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1Th.4:16-17). This is understood by most as a pre-tribulation catching away.

The rapture will be instantaneous in nature, and we will receive glorified bodies at that time. “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1Co.15:51-52). This event will free believers totally from sin to be in God’s presence forever. Paul tells us we should “…encourage each other with these words” (1Th.4:18).

This event has been confused with the Second Coming of Christ, which we will discuss below. The rapture is an event that will take place sometime in the near future. Jesus will come in the air, catch up the Church from the earth, and then return to heaven with the Church.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1Th.4:16-18).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [must] put on immortality” (1Co.15:51-53, AMP).

The word “rapture” comes from Paul’s “caught up” remark in verse 17. The words “caught up” are translated from the Greek word harpazo, which means “to carry off, snatch up,” or “grasp hastily.” The translation from harpazo to “rapture” involved two steps: first, harpazo became the Latin word raptus; second, raptus became the English word “rapture.”
A. Scriptural Evidence for the Pre-tribulation Rapture

From Scriptures describing the Lord Jesus’ return, we find we will not know the day and hour of that event. Jesus will return at an unknown time (Mt.25:13), while the Jews will have to wait on the Lord 1,260 days, starting when the Antichrist stands in the Temple of God and declares himself to be God (Re.12:6; 2Th.2:4). This event will take place at the mid-point of the seven-year Tribulation (Da.9:27). Note that some only see a three-and-a-half-year tribulation, also called by some the Great Tribulation. In a way, they are correct because the first half of the tribulation will be relatively peaceful compared to the second half. Nonetheless, peaceful or not, there still remains a seven-year period called the Tribulation. The only way for these two viewpoints to be true is to separate the two distinct events transpiring here: a) the rapture of the Church, which many teach will come about before the tribulation; 2) the return of Jesus physically to the earth, which takes place roughly seven years later.

A group of people called preterists claim that the Book of Revelation was mostly fulfilled by 70 AD, but that does not match current events, such as the rebirth of Israel, the reunification of Europe (Old Roman Empire, a ten nation group, which has not yet been completed exactly), the number of global wars that have occurred and seem to be ready to occur again, and the development of nuclear weapons. A third of the trees being burned, 100-pound hailstones falling from the sky, and the sea being turned into blood has not yet taken place (Re.8:7-8, 16:21).

B. Come Up Hither

Many pre-tribulation writers cite Revelation 4:1, which says, “...come up hither,” as a prophetic reference to the rapture of the Church, leaving Revelation chapters 1 through 3 as a description of the Church Age. After the shout to “come up hither,” the Church is not mentioned in Scripture at all. The attention of Scripture switches from the Church to the Jews living in Israel.

C. Not Appointed to Wrath

Paul assures us that God has not appointed His people to wrath (1Th.5:9). This wrath is plainly God’s anger that will be poured out during the Tribulation. Pre-tribulation believers interpret this as meaning that Christians will be removed from the earth. Post-tribulation rapture believers say that God will protect Christians during the tribulation and pour this wrath out on the unbelievers only; please note that there are very few post-tribulation believers. However, the only way to validly interpret God’s promise of protection from wrath is by viewing Paul’s statement as the bodily removal of the Church from this world (1Th.5:9).
XXVI. THE SECOND COMING

Here we deal with cosmic eschatology, which are the future events involving the Second Coming, the Resurrection, and the Final Judgment.

A. The Second Coming

Other than the doctrine of death, the Second Coming is the most accepted doctrine by theologians when cosmic eschatology is discussed. It is the basis for every Christian’s hope and is attested numerous times in the Scriptures.

Jesus Himself gave us many details about His return, especially on Mount Olivet, when He delivered what is known as the Olivet discourse (Mt.24-25). Everywhere Jesus went, He constantly reminded people that the best was yet to come. Even as Jesus was leaving the angels said, “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Ac.1:11). After Jesus had ascended, the New Testament writers continued to repeat the message of His Second Coming. Paul was undoubtedly the clearest when he addressed the Thessalonians (1Th.4:15-16). However, there are two events that can be confused if we do not clearly understand the difference between the rapture or catching away of the Church and the Second Coming which is immediately before the Millennial Reign.

Along with the proclamation about His return, we are made aware that no time or date can be attached to the Rapture, but can be set for the Second Coming, when the event is seven years out. Knowledge of this timing can be set by the peace treaty that will be made by the antichrist with Israel, seeming to guarantee peace between them and the nations/peoples around them. Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Ac.1:7). This was repeatedly stated throughout Jesus’ ministry. It was made perfectly clear that “...no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Jesus continued with a most important message by stating “Be on guard! Be alert!” (Mk.13:32-33, 35)

B. Method of Return

Some think Jesus returned on the Day of Pentecost in spirit form; while there is some truth in this, it is not the full picture of the Second Coming. The Scriptures indicate that Christ’s return will be physical and visual. He continually urged His disciples to “be ready” and they lived their lives in the expectancy of His return. Paul encouraged the Church to “...wait for the blessed hope” (Tit.2:13). Peter used the words, “...eagerly wait” referring to the Second Coming, showing us the imminence of His return (2Pe.3:12).
C. Resurrection

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be a resurrection for the righteous, which have been freed from death, and a separate one for the wicked, who will face their final judgment for the evil deeds they have done and for their refusal to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Both the Old and New Testament alike teach this doctrine. The righteous living will be included with the righteous dead and will be resurrected at the “rapture” or catching away.

The Scripture teaches us that God shall raise the bodies of all men remaining in the grave on the last day (Jn.5:28-29; Job.19:25-27; Jn.6:40). The resurrection of the body is an essential doctrine, referring to God’s raising of a body from the dead and reuniting it with the soul and spirit, from which it was separated during the intermediate state.

The resurrection of Jesus is one of the central truths of the Gospel, for it: 1) proves He is the Son of God (Jn.10:17-18); 2) guarantees the efficacy (power) of His redemptive death (Ro.6:4); 3) verifies the truth of Scripture (Ps.16:10; Lk.24:44-47; Ac.2:31); 4) is proof of future judgment on the wicked (Ac.17:30-31); 5) is the foundation for Christ’s gift of the Holy Spirit and spiritual life to His people (Jn.20:22; Ro.5:10), and for his heavenly ministry of intercession for the Believer (He.7:23-28); 6) assures Believers of their future heavenly inheritance (1Pe.1:3-4), and of their resurrection or translation when the Lord returns; 7) makes available the presence of Christ and His power over sin in our everyday experience (Ga.2:20; Ep.1:18-20).

D. Christ is the Resurrection

He saith unto them, But who day ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed are thou, Simon BarJonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charg he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ. From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. (Mt.16:15-21)

Jesus prophesied His own death to the disciples, not many days before the crucifixion. Yet they did not understand and could not receive it. Upon arrival at Jerusalem, the high priest and scribes came into agreement with Judas Iscariot to betray Him, that they might crucify Him. Taking Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, He endured illegal trials at which He was found guilty of “blasphemy” due to the fact
that He agreed with their statements that He was the Son of God. Following the soldiers mocking him, placing a crown of thorns on His head, spitting on Him and scourging Him with 39 lashes, they led Him out to crucify Him. Simon of Cyrene was required to carry His cross due to His weakness from blood loss, etc. On the cross, He “...uttered a loud cry and yielded up His spirit and the curtain of the Sanctuary was torn into, from top to bottom”, opening the way to God for us. It was on a Friday, but Sunday was coming.

Jesus testified to Martha when Lazarus had been in the grave four days that “Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (Jn.11:21-27).

When Jesus died, they laid Him in a borrowed tomb. The Resurrection and the Life had been buried, but Sunday came! So it will be for the Believer (1Co.15:51-55; 1Th.4:13-18). Death could not hold Him; the grave could not keep Him. It may be Friday in our life, but Sunday's coming!

E. **Other Events**

Other events will take place at His Second Coming.

1. With Him will come the resurrected saints, traveling with him on white horses, “...clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Re.19:14).

2. Christ will defeat the armies of man that are arrayed against Israel and against God’s people of faith (v.15).

3. The defeat of the nations will coincide with the feeding of the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field (v.17).

4. Christ will set up His Millennial Kingdom and “...rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron” (v.15).

5. The beast and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire (v.20).

6. The devil will be bound and held captive 1,000 years, so that he cannot tempt man during the Millennial Reign (20:1-3).

F. **Final Judgment**

Before the final judgment, Satan will be loosed from the bottomless pit for a season to deceive man again (Re.20:7). That episode will end quickly with the Lord sending fire from heaven to stop them and the devil is then thrown into the lake of fire also (v.9-10). Once that battle is finished and the resurrection of the wicked takes place, they will face God’s Great White Throne Judgment (Re.20:11-14), to
face their final end (v.15). The Believers will have already been judged for their works at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Re.20:4). Though these do not occur together, they will be final. This will happen after history runs its course and God’s purposes are fulfilled. It is important that every Christian be looking for the imminent return of our Lord, and that we act in accordance with God’s will. At that time we will see God’s justice manifested, which is and will be a perfect justice.

XXVII. MILLENNIAL AND TRIBULATIONAL VIEWS

There are diverse opinions concerning the thousand years of peace (Millennium) described in Revelation and the events associated with it (Re.20:4). Some interpret a literal, future, thousand-year time period in which Christ will rule over the Earth, a time which will be characterized by peace and harmony. Others understand a literal age of peace, but think the “thousand years” is a figure of speech. Still others see the Millennium as symbolic of a spiritual ideal, with no corresponding earthly condition. All of these positions fall into the category of Millennialism, a broad term which includes any and all ideas relating to the Millennium of biblical prophecy.

Traditionally theologians have held to three millennial views that have been developed over the history of the Church and were brought on by historical conditions. The first was developed by the Church in the first three centuries and is called postmillennialism

A. Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism was the predominate view throughout the Middle Ages. It pictures the Millennium beginning with the first coming of Christ and does not consider it to be in the future. It is easy to see how it began when we consider that the Church era viewed Mark 3:7 as Satan being bound by Christ for a thousand years while the Gospel was being spread. They also believed that after the thousand year period, Satan would be released for a short period of time (Re.20:3). When the first millennium ended and Christ did not return, they viewed the millennium not as a distinct time period, but an era of time.

Those who hold to postmillennialism do not believe in a pre-millennial appearance of Christ. The postmillennial position is that the millennium began at the inauguration of Christ's Kingdom reign when He ascended to His heavenly throne and happens, not as a result of the coming of Christ, but as the global population converts to Christianity as a result of evangelization. The Age of Peace is still a progressing work of divine grace, according to this belief, but without the visible presence of Christ to take the place of an earthly ruler. It says that Christ will appear at the end of the Millennium to lead His people into the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem.
B. Pre-millennialism

The second view is called the pre-millennialism. This view takes the approach that Christ will return to earth in bodily form to rule for a thousand years. It takes a future approach to the Millennium rather than a past event as the postmillennialists teach. This view was held by the Early Church which looked expectantly for the return of Christ. This view grew into popularity in the 19th century when dispensationalism was developed.

Pre-millennialism teaches that two resurrections will occur, one at the beginning and one at the end of the period. During the thousand years, universal harmony will take place because Satan is bound for that period. Even nature will be in perfect peace as creation should be. This view also believes Israel has a special place in God's end-time scheme.

Standard pre-millennialism says that Christ's Second Coming will inaugurate a literal thousand-year earthly Kingdom. Christ's return will coincide with a time of great tribulation. At that time, there will be a resurrection of the people of God who have died, and a rapture of the people of God who are still living, and they will meet Christ at His coming. A thousand years of peace will follow, during which Christ will reign and Satan will be imprisoned in the Abyss. Those who hold to pre-millennialism also see the possibility of three different time frames taking place prior to the Millennium:

1. Pre-tribulationists;

Pre-tribulationists believe that the Second Coming will be in two stages separated by a seven-year period of tribulation. At the beginning of the tribulation, true Christians will rise to meet the Lord in the air (the Rapture). Then follows a seven-year period of suffering in which the Antichrist will conquer the world and persecute those who refuse to worship him. At the end of this period, Christ returns to defeat the Antichrist and establishes the Age of Peace. This position is supported by a Scripture, among others, which says, "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Th.5:9).

2. Mid-tribulationists;

Mid-tribulationists believe that the Rapture will take place at the halfway point of the seven-year tribulation, i.e. after 3½ years. This would coincide with the "...abomination of desolation." the desecration of the Temple where the Antichrist puts an end to the Jewish sacrifices, sets up his own image in the Temple, and demands that he be worshiped as God. This event begins the second, most intense part of the tribulation, also known as the Great Tribulation (Mt.24:21; Re.7:14).
Some interpreters find support for the “mid-tribulation” position by comparing a passage in Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians with the Book of Revelation. Paul says, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1Co.15:51-52). Revelation divides the great tribulation into three sets of increasingly catastrophic judgments: a) the Seven Seals; b) the Seven Trumpets; c) the Seven Bowls, in that order (though it also appears that they may be simultaneous in activity). If the “...last trumpet” of Paul is equated with the last trumpet of Revelation, the Rapture would be in the middle of the Tribulation. Not all interpreters agree with this literal interpretation of the chronology of Revelation, however.

3. Post-tribulationists;

Post-tribulationists hold that Christ will not return until the end of the tribulation. Christians, rather than being raptured or caught away at the beginning of the tribulation, or halfway through, will live through it and suffer for their faith during the ascendancy of the Antichrist. Proponents of this position believe that the presence of believers during the tribulation is necessary for a final evangelistic effort during a time when external conditions will combine with the Gospel message to bring great numbers of converts into the Church in time for the beginning of the Millennium.

C. A-millennialism

The third view is a-millennialism. They believe that there is no Millennium and no earthly reign of Christ. Following the final judgment people will go directly into the final state. This view considers the thousand year reign of Christ as a symbolical time period. In fact they teach the entire Book of Revelation is to be taken symbolically. The real exegetical problem with this view is not so much the thousand year reign, but the two resurrections. The overall problem with this view is that a-millennialism produces negativism.

The Scriptural view seems to lend to pre-millennialism, along with the time era that we live in today. It is understandable how the postmillennial theory began and held the attention of the first millennium Church, but after the turn of the first millennium it suddenly became out-dated. The pre-millennial view takes the center of the stage because there are no biblical passages that cannot be adequately dealt with.

A-millennialists believe the “thousand years” is an expression, a way of referring to the entire period from the first coming of Christ, two thousand years ago, until the future Second Coming. Many a-millennialists believe that during this time period, the Church will continue to evangelize and grow as well as suffer declination in periods until Christ’s coming. They say the Second Coming will be a natural
culmination of the process of world evangelization, rather than a revolutionary event that brings sudden and dramatic change.

D. Tribulational Views

Throughout Church History, tribulation and persecution has always taken place. The Pre-tribulational view sees Christ’s Second Coming as occurring in two events that happen before and after the tribulation period, while the post-tribulational view sees one return at the end of the tribulation. The strongest argument for a pre-tribulation rapture is the imminent return of Christ. Both sides use numerous Scriptures to prove their point. Some have said that the pre-tribulational position seems to be more artificial than biblical.

There are also two other views, namely, a mid-tribulation rapture and a partial rapture view. However, these positions are very weak due to lack of Scriptural support. Though much has been taught and debated over this subject, God has many secret things (De. 29:29), and where the Scripture leaves a rather ambiguous position on the issue, we would do well to leave it up to God.

XXVIII. FINAL STATE

The final state deals primarily with individual eschatology, because the final judgments of man are individually considered. Each person will be responsible for their final state by the way they respond to God’s call.

A. Heaven

The final state of the righteous will be in what we call “heaven,” up to the time of the return of Christ, with His followers, to earth physically. We can see that heaven can be defined in three ways by how it is used in the Scripture. First is the cosmological usage, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Ge.1:1). Jesus also referred to “…heaven and earth” passing away (Mt 5:8; 24:35; Lk.16:17). Here it is used to mean universe. The second usage is used as a synonym for God, as in “I have sinned against heaven and against you (the prodigal’s father)” (Lk.15:18, 21), and, “…was it from heaven (God) or from men?” (Mt.21:25). It is also used for the abode of God. For example, in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus used the phrase, “Our Father who art in heaven” (Mt.6:9); also He prayed to His Father “in heaven” numerous times. Heaven is the place where Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (Jn.14:2-3).

The nature of heaven is the exhibiting of the presence of God (Re.21:3). It has always been the desire of God to fellowship with man. Even after the fall, God continued fellowship with His people in a Tabernacle, then a Temple, and today in our bodies (as the Temple). In Heaven, knowledge is perfect because God’s presence removes all imperfections (1Co.13:9-12). There, we will be able to see things clearly and completely.
The nature of heaven also characterizes the removal of all evil and a new order will be in existence for those who go there. No more sorrow or pain will be possible because God “...will wipe away all tears” (Re.21:4). Even the one who tempts us to sin will be gone because the devil will be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever (Re.20:10).

Heaven is now filled with God’s glory due to the fact that God’s glory is His nature. Everything about God expresses His glory. Even the angels began the announcement of Jesus by saying, “Glory to God in the highest” (Lk.2:14). At Jesus’ triumphal entry the crowds shouted, “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest” (Lk.19:38). When Christ returns He told multitudes that He would come “...in the glory of his father” (Mk.8:38). And of course in the New Jerusalem there will be no need for the “...sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Re.21:23).

**B. New Jerusalem**

The City itself (Re.21:2), will have a large wall with twelve gates in it which are never shut, and which have the names of the twelve Tribes of Israel written on them. Each of the gates is made of a single pearl, and there is an angel standing guard at each one (Re.21:12-14). The wall also has twelve foundations which are adorned with precious stones, and upon the foundations are written the names of the twelve apostles (Re.21:19). The gates and foundations are often interpreted as symbolizing the people of God before and after Christ.

The City and its streets are pure gold, but not like the gold we know, for this gold is described as being like clear glass (Re.21:18, 21). The City is square in shape, and is twelve thousand furlongs long and wide (fifteen hundred miles). If these are comparable to earthly measurements, the City will cover an area about half the size of the contiguous United States. The height is the same as the length and breadth, and although this has led most people to conclude that it is shaped like a cube, it could also be a pyramid.

The City has a river which proceeds “…out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Re.22:1). Next to the river is the Tree of Life, which bear “…twelve fruits,” as it is said in Young’s Literal Translation, and the Tree yields its fruit every month. The last time we saw the Tree of Life in Scripture was in the Garden of Eden (Ge.2:9). God drove Adam and Eve away from it because it bestowed eternal life and He did not want them to live forever in their degraded state (Ge.3:22). In the New Jerusalem, the Tree of Life reappears, and everyone in the City has access to it. Genesis tells us that the earth was cursed because of Adam’s sin (Ge.3:17), but then John writes that in the New Jerusalem, “…there will be no more curse” (Re.22:3).
The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Baker, 1984) says:

“The rich symbolism reaches beyond our finest imaginings, not only to the beatific vision but to a renewed, joyous, industrious, orderly, holy, loving, eternal, and abundant existence. Perhaps the most moving element in the description is what is missing—there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, ‘because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.’ Vastly outstripping the expectations of Judaism, this stated omission signals the ultimate reconciliation.”

Several places in the Scripture we are told about our activities in the final state. In Hebrews the term “rest” was introduced, not as a ceasing of activities, but as a runner who accomplished his goal. The Children of Israel entered into the Promised Land, a place of “rest,” even though there was still work to do. This is a picture of our rest in the eternity of eternities, not a ceasing of activities, but an entirely new and peaceful state of government for us to assist our Lord in rulership. This appears to be a part of the idea that humans born of woman will still be increasing the population of the earth.

The righteous will be rewarded by the degrees of obedience and fruitfulness they have exhibited (Lk.19:11-27). And as Daniel said, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Da.12:3). Paul gave us a picture of the type of work that will last and the type of work that will be destroyed (1Co.3:14-15). Only the works that last will rewards be given out for.

There is also a final state for the wicked. They will also be judged according to the evil they have done and degrees of punishment will be measured out accordingly (Mt.11:21-24). The greater the knowledge (light) we have falls in line with responsibility in the way we handle the knowledge and the judgment will be accordingly.

Some believe this punishment will be temporary. The ones that support this view are referred to as “annihilationist.” Annihilation teaches God as being just, Who would not extend punishment beyond an unreasonable length; however the Scripture does not support this. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of an unending and an unquenchable fire (Is.66:24; Mk.9:43-48).

When sin is committed it is not just a finite act, but an act against an infinite God and the punishment for that sin is infinite. God made it clear that He does not send anyone to Hell, nor is it His will that any should perish (2Pe.3:9). Hell is God’s final saying to anyone who says, “Go away and leave me alone.” It is the individual person who sends self to hell, not God.
Part II
Righteousness

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness is a critical part of the right understanding of a Pastor if he is to be a proper theologian and shepherd of the local church. Righteousness is one of the chief attributes of God as portrayed in the Bible. Its chief meaning concerns ethical conduct (Le.19:36; De.25:1; Ps.1:6; Pr.8:20). It is used in a legal sense, where the guilty are judged and the guiltless are deemed righteous. God's faithfulness to His Covenant is also a large part of His righteousness (Ne.9:7-8). Righteousness also relates to God's role as Savior; God is a "righteous" Savior (Is.61) and a Deliverer (Is.46:12-13). The righteous are those who trust in Christ's atonement for sin and that they will be vindicated by the Lord God (Ps.37:12-13).

A. Hebrew Definition

The Hebrew word for "righteousness" is tseh'-dek, (tzedek), meaning "righteous, integrity, equity, justice, straightness." The root oftseh'-dek is tsaw-dak' meaning "upright, just, straight, innocent, true, sincere." It is best understood as the product of upright, moral action in accordance with some form of divine plan. In the Book of Job, the title character is introduced to us as a person who is "perfect" in righteousness.

The New Testament continues the Hebrew Bible's tradition of the ethical (1Th.2:10) and legal (1Co.4:4) aspects of righteousness. Jesus asserted the importance of righteousness by saying that "...unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt.5:20). He also reaffirmed the Law of Moses by saying, "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (5:19).

Paul speaks of two ways, at least in theory, to achieve righteousness: 1) through the Torah, the law of Moses; 2) and through faith in the atonement made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Ro.10:3-13). He repeatedly emphasized that faith is the only effective way, for man cannot keep the Law. For example, just a few verses earlier, he said that the Jews did not attain to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but by works (Ro.9:30-33). The New Testament speaks of a salvation founded on God's righteousness, as exemplified throughout the history of salvation narrated in the Old Testament (Ro.9-11).

Paul wrote to the Romans that righteousness comes by faith: "...a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’"
(Ro.1:17). Thus Paul makes the New Testament Church a “Church Of Righteousness.”

James speaks of the relationship between works of righteousness and faith (Ja.2:14-26), saying that “…faith without works is dead.” Righteous acts according to James include works of charity (Ja.2:15-16), as well as avoiding sins against the law of Moses (Ja.2:11-12).

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, “righteous” is a type of saint who is regarded as a holy person under the Old Covenant (Old Testament Israel), but also sometimes used for married saints of the New Covenant (the Church). According to Orthodox theology, the righteous saints of the Old Covenant were not able to enter into heaven until after the death of Jesus on the cross (He.11:40), but had to await salvation in the “…bosom of Abraham.”

B. The Righteousness of God

The righteousness of God, one of the most prominent attributes of God in the Scriptures, is also one of the most elusive. Initially, distinguishing the righteousness of God from His holiness or His goodness seems difficult. In addition, the righteousness of God is virtually synonymous with His justice:

While the most common Old Testament word for just means “straight,” and the New Testament word means “equal,” in a moral sense they both mean “right.” When we say that God is just, we are saying that He always does what is right, what should be done, and that He does it consistently, without partiality or prejudice. The word “just” and the word “righteous” are identical in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Sometimes the translators render the original word as “just” and other times as “righteous” with no apparent reason (cf. Ne.9:8, 33, where the same word is used). But whichever word they used, it means essentially the same thing. It has to do with God’s actions, which are always right and fair.

God’s righteousness or justice is the natural expression of His holiness. Since He is infinitely pure, He must be opposed to all sin, and that opposition to sin must be demonstrated in His treatment of His creatures. When we read that God is righteous or just, we are being assured that His actions toward us are in perfect agreement with His holy nature.

These words by Richard Strauss bring us very close to a concise definition of righteousness. “Righteousness, in relation to men, is their conformity to a standard.” Unlike men, God is not subject to anything outside of Himself. No one states this better than A.W. Tozer:

“It is sometimes said, ‘Justice requires God to do this,’ referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to
act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience. The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God’s reasons come from within His uncreated being. Nothing has entered the being of God from eternity, nothing has been removed, and nothing has been changed.

Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation... God is His own self-existent principle of moral equity, and when He sentences evil men or rewards the righteous, He simply acts like Himself from within, uninfluenced by anything that is not Himself.”

We must then say the righteousness of God is evident in the way He consistently acts in accord with His own character. God always acts righteously; His every action is consistent with His character. God is always and consistently “Godly.” God is not defined by the term “righteous,” as much as the term “righteous” is defined by God. God is not measured by the standard of righteousness; God sets the standard of righteousness.

C. Abraham and the Righteousness of God

In Genesis 18:16-33, we see the events surrounding God coming to earth to “see” what He already knew, that Sodom was exceedingly wicked. In His conversation with Abraham, sharing what He was about to do, Abraham began to intercede for Lot who was living in Sodom. Abraham’s intercession started with 50 and got all the way down to ten, with God saying He would not destroy all if He found just ten there who had not become exceedingly wicked (vs.25-26, 28, etc.).

The righteousness of God is introduced very early in the Bible in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. That attribute of righteousness is the basis for Abraham’s appeal to God for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God is described anthropomorphically (in human-like terms) as having heard the “…great outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah” (v.20). That outcry likely came from a righteous person, such as “…righteous Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed by the wickedness of these cities” (2Pe.2:6-8).

In the judicial terminology of our day, God was unwilling to act solely on the basis of hearsay. It was His intention to “go down” to this place and find out for Himself whether these allegations were true. Now of course we know God is omniscient. He knows all. He did not need to take a trip to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if these cities were really wicked. He knew they were wicked. But, from our point of view, God wants us to know He acts justly. He acts on the basis of information of which He has personal knowledge. Thus, when God judged those cities, He did so justly for they were truly wicked.
We find it interesting that verses 17-21 precede the account of Abraham’s intercession for those cities. God knew what He was going to do. What He purposed to do was righteous and just. But God wanted Abraham to be a part of what He was doing. If God was to act justly, He was simply acting consistently with His character. But involving Abraham was also consistent with His Covenant with him and the goal of that Covenant. After all, God had already placed man in authority on earth, even if Adam had given it away. God wanted to see what Abraham’s heart and goal was for earth and his fellow man. God’s purpose for calling Abraham and making a Covenant with him is spelled out (vs.17-19).

And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him (Ge.18:17-19- ed. emphasis added).

God’s purpose for calling Abraham and making a Covenant with him was for Abraham to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice and to teach his offspring to do likewise. Righteousness was the divine goal for Abraham and his offspring, even as it is for us today.

When God informed Abraham He was about to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham began to intercede for them. His concern was for the righteous in those cities. How could God possibly destroy those cities if there were righteous men and women living in them? If God destroyed both the wicked and the righteous without distinguishing them, then God would not be acting righteously or justly. And surely God, as “…the Judge of all the earth,” must act justly (v.25).

While Abraham interceded with God on behalf of the righteous, beginning with 50 and eventually getting down to ten (v.32), there simply were not ten righteous in those cities. There were but four, if we include Lot’s wife. But God, in His justice, would not deal with the wicked in a way that punished the righteous as well. He did not spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but He did spare Lot and his family by rescuing them from the city of Sodom before the angels destroyed it.

We see in the Book of Genesis God’s purpose in calling Abraham and his offspring; to rise up a people characterized by righteousness and justice. God not only showed Himself to be righteous and just, He also worked in Abraham’s life to show he was a man who loved righteousness and justice.
D. God’s Righteousness and the Nation Israel

God’s righteousness was to be seen in His every dealing with the nation Israel. Hear the words of Samuel:

*Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. So now, take your stand that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers”* (2Sa.12:6-7).

God’s righteousness in His dealings with the nation of Israel had various manifestations.

1. Revealing His will and righteousness;

God revealed His righteousness by revealing His will and His Word to the world through the nation Israel (De.4:5-8; Ps.33:4). God deals with men on the basis of what He has revealed to them. He often tells men what He will do well in advance of the event so they will know God is God and that He has accomplished what He promised (Is.45:21).

What God has not revealed does not need to be known (De.29:29). All that is necessary for “...life and godliness” has been revealed to us (2Pe.1:4), so that we may be fully equipped (2Ti.3:14-17).

2. Instruction through the Word;

God revealed His righteousness by instructing men in His Word (Ps.25:8). Often that instruction came through the Levitical priests (Le.10:11; De.24:8; Ne.8:9; 2Ch.17:7-9), or through the prophets like Moses (De.4:1, 5, 14; Ex.18:20).

3. Fulfilling His promises;

God revealed His righteousness by fulfilling His promises (Ne.9:7-8). Each time God fulfilled His promise, He showed Himself to be righteous.

4. Judging Israel’s enemies;

God revealed His righteousness by judging the enemies of Israel (Ex.9:27). Psalms 96 tells us that God will “...judge the world in righteousness” (v.13). God likewise shows Himself to be righteous when He judges the nation of Israel for their sin and disobedience. In Rehoboam’s kingdom, as he became strong, he and all Israel with him forsook the law of the LORD. So God, in the 5th year of his rule, brought Shishak, king of Egypt, and allowed him to
capture the fortified cities of Judah, all the way up to Jerusalem. Shemaiah the prophet went to Rehoboam with God’s message, “You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.” When this message was delivered, the “…princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, ‘The LORD is righteous’” (2Ch.12:1-6; see also Ezra 9:15; Da.9:7-8).

5. God reveals His righteousness in the way He rules;

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom (Ps.45:6).

God’s rule is righteous over all His Kingdom. It is the foundation of His throne (Ps.89:14). We know that His throne is based on righteous principles and judgments which are according to truth. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne (Ps.97:2). Righteousness is the principle that acts according to justice and equity; that gives to all their due, and ever holds all things in an even balance. The very throne of God is animated; righteousness and judgment are the two “intellectual beings” that support it.

6. God reveals righteousness in His anger;

God’s hatred for sin and His anger at it are demonstrated as He “…tests the righteous and the wicked” (Ps.11:5). “God is a righteous judge; And a God who has indignation every day” (Ps.7:11).

7. Righteousness revealed by protection;

God reveals His righteousness in His protection of the poor and the afflicted (Ps.140:12). God will “arise” when the poor are oppressed or the needy are depressed (Ps.12:5).

8. Showing mercy and compassion;

God reveals His righteousness when He shows mercy and compassion (Ps.116:5-6). The Lord longs to be gracious to us and “He waits on high to have compassion on you” because He is a “…God of justice” (Is.30:18).


Isaiah tells us that the Lord has “…made known His salvation” and “…revealed His righteousness” before the nations (Ps.98:2). God remembers both His loving-kindness and faithfulness “…to the house of Israel”, revealing “…the salvation of our God” (v.3). Jesus bore the iniquities of mankind and justified many, proving God’s righteousness (Is.53:11).
This is a very significant aspect of God’s righteousness. God is righteous in saving sinners. So often we think God’s righteousness is revealed in His judgment of sinners and His mercy by His salvation of sinners. The Scriptures teach that God’s righteousness is the cause of both condemnation and justification. He is righteous in saving sinners, as well as merciful and compassionate. God is righteous in all His dealings with men, indeed in all His dealings.

The righteousness of God and the justice of God are not secondary matters; they are primary. The righteousness or justice of God is to be the guiding principle for the people of God. When the Old Testament prophets sought to sum up the essence of the Old Testament teaching regarding man’s conduct, it was that men practice righteousness or justice (Amos 5:21-24). God is not interested with rituals, but with justice and righteousness. Micah elaborated on this with a strong statement on what God requires:

> He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? (Mi.6:6-8).

When summarizing the very essence of what the Old Testament Law was about, Amos and Micah both spoke first of justice and righteousness. God is not interested in a legalistic or ritualistic keeping of the Law, as though one might make himself righteous by so doing. God is interested in men seeking to know His heart and pleasing Him by doing that in which He delights and that which He does.

### E. Righteousness of God in the New Testament

If righteousness and justice are the heart of the Old Testament Law, they are also at the heart of the dispute between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. At the very outset of His earthly ministry, Jesus set out to contrast His interpretation of the Old Testament teaching on righteousness with that of the scribes and Pharisees. In reality, Jesus did not offer a “new” interpretation of righteousness or of the Law; rather He sought to reestablish the proper understanding of righteousness as taught in the Law and the Prophets. Thus, Jesus repeatedly used the formula, “You have heard it said...” (the scribes and Pharisees teaching), “But I say to you...” Jesus was telling them and all who heard Him that the present day religious leader's interpretation of the Law was incorrect, and was to be understood another way.

The scribes and Pharisees thought of themselves as setting the standard for righteousness. They felt that they, of all men, were righteous. Jesus shocked all when He said,

> For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt.5:20).
It was clear that if the scribes and Pharisees could not produce enough righteousness on their own, no one could. The standard of righteousness the Law held forth was even higher than that of the scribes and Pharisees. No one was righteous enough, even in their efforts to keep the Law, to get into heaven. What a shock to the self-righteous who thought they had box office seats in the Kingdom.

If Jesus shocked His audience when He said those who appeared to be the most righteous would not make it into the Kingdom on their kind of righteousness, He also shocked them as to who would be blessed by entrance into the Kingdom; those whom the scribes and Pharisees thought unworthy of the Kingdom. Those blessed were not the scribes and Pharisees, but the “...poor in spirit,” those who “mourn,” the “gentle,” those who “...hunger and thirst for righteousness,” the “merciful,” the “...pure in heart,” the “peacemakers,” and those who would be “persecuted” on account of their relationship with Jesus (Mt.5:3-12).

Jesus taught that true righteousness is not that which men regard as righteous, based upon external appearances, but that so judged by God based upon His assessment of the heart,

*And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God” (Lk.16:15).*

The scribes and Pharisees, who thought themselves so righteous because of their rigorous attention to external matters, proved to be just the opposite when judged by our Lord. He castigated them for being inwardly “…full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” He charged them with being hypocrites because they built “…the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,” while testifying against themselves that they were sons of those who murdered the prophets. So doing, they were bearing witness against themselves and would “Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers.” Jesus used strong words against those who thought ritual keeping of the Law would suffice for salvation. He called them a “brood of vipers”- actually they and their fathers, the priesthood before them. Jesus was plain to them about the “…guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar,” which guilt would fall on them (Mt.23:28-35).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned against externalism and ceremonialism. He told them their practice of “…righteousness before men to be noticed by them” was not enough to receive a reward (Mt.6:1). According to Jesus, true righteousness is vastly different from the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. False righteousness is measured by men on the basis of externalism. True righteousness is judged such by God, in accordance with His Word, and first of all connected to the heart condition- a requirement for true changed action and lifestyle. Because of this, men need to beware of attempting to judge the
righteousness of others (see Mt.7:1). Those whose deeds seemed to indicate they were righteous were those whom God denied ever having known as His children (Mt.7:15-23). Those who appeared to be righteous were not, and those who appeared unrighteous by the religious leadership of that day may well have been righteous. It is no wonder then that Jesus was not regarded as righteous by many of the Jews but was considered a sinner (Jn.9:16, 24-25).

The great division which arose among the Jews was over the issue of whether Jesus was a righteous man or a sinner (Jn.10:19-21). The Old and New Testament leave no doubt in our minds whether the Lord Jesus was righteous. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah as the “…Righteous One” who would “…justify the many” (Is.53:11). Jeremiah spoke of Him as the “…righteous Branch” (Je.23:5). When Jesus was baptized, it was to “…fulfill all righteousness” (Mt.3:15). Both Pilate’s wife (Mt.27:19) and the soldier at the foot of the cross (Lk.23:47) acknowledged His righteousness at the very moment when men were condemning Him.

The apostles likewise continued to bear witness to the righteousness of Christ (1Jn.2:1), testifying of Jesus as their “…advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” John also said that we could know who was born again by their practice of righteousness (1Jn.2:29).

The righteousness of God is particularly important in relation to salvation. Paul pointed out God not only justifies the sinner, declaring them righteous, but He is also shown to be just (righteous) in the process (Ro.3:21-28). Though all have sinned, they are “…justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” He went on to say that “This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.” None of this could take place by following the Law of Moses, but “…by a law of faith.” Men have failed to live up to the standard of righteousness laid down by the Law (Ro.3:9-20). God is just in condemning all men to death, for all men without exception have sinned and “…come short of the glory of God” (Ro.3:23). All men are worthy of death because the “…wages of sin is death” (Ro6:23). God is just in condemning the unrighteous, but thank God for His “…unspeakable gift” of righteousness through Christ.

God is also just in saving sinners. As Paul puts it, He is “…just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Ro.3:26). This is because God’s righteous anger has been propitiated (satisfied). Justice was done on the cross of Calvary, by Jesus Christ, for all humanity. God did not reduce the charges against men; He did not change the standard of righteousness, but did receive propitiation of His righteous anger by the Last Adam, Jesus Christ. God poured out the full measure of His righteous wrath upon His Son on the cross of Calvary. In Him, justice was meted out. All of those who trust in Him by faith are justified. Their sins are forgiven because Jesus paid the full price; He suffered the full measure of God’s wrath in our place. And for those who reject the goodness and mercy of God at Calvary,
they must pay the penalty for their sins themselves because they would not accept
the only payment acceptable to God; Jesus taking their place on the cross.

The cross of Calvary accomplished a just salvation, for all who will receive it. But
we also know that only those whom God has chosen - the “elect” - will repent and
trust in the death of Christ on their behalf. This raises another question related to
divine justice. After clearly teaching the doctrine of divine election, Paul asked how
election squared with the justice of God, and then gave us the answer;

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel
who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they
are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be
named.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God,
but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. For this is a
word of promise: “At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.” And
not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by
one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born, and had
not done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to His
choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it
was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written,
“Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” What shall we say then? There is no
injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, “I will
have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I
have compassion.” So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the
man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to
Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in
you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.”
So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He
desires. You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who
resists His will?” On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to
God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me
like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make
from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common
use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make
His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for
destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of
His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,
even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from
among Gentiles (Ro.9:6-24).

The question assumes that divine election has been taught by Paul as a biblical
fact. If it were not so - as it clearly is - the question would not have been raised by
Paul. And if there is no such thing as election, Paul could have simply brushed the
question aside as illogical and unreasonable. But Paul assumes the truth of
election and the possibility that some might object on the grounds that election
would make God unjust. Paul first rebukes the one who dares to judge God and
pronounce on His righteousness. How presumptuous can a man be? Should God stand before the bar of human judgment? Of course not! The fact is that men have to “elect to be elected”; that is, they have to accept the election of God, for none are forced to take it. God is omniscient and knows from eternity past who will accept and who will not.

As seen in Romans 3, God is righteous in that He has condemned all. In Christ, those who are justified have died with Him and are raised to newness of life. God is also righteous for judging all those who refuse to accept His offer of salvation in Christ. God would be unjust only if He set aside justice rather than fulfilling it in Christ, whether by His sacrificial death at His first coming or by His judging the unbelieving world at His second coming.

Divine grace, the grace by which God reaches out to save men from their sins, is not meted out on the basis of men’s merits, but in spite of men’s sin. Grace is bestowed from a sovereign God. God would be unjust only if He withheld blessings from men who deserved them. Since God is free to bestow unmerited blessings on any sinner He may choose, God is not unrighteous in saving some of the worst sinners, while choosing not to save other sinners (those who refuse to be elected).

The Good News of the Gospel is that salvation by grace is offered to all men. By the righteousness of Jesus Christ, men may be forgiven of their sins and made righteous, for as Paul said to the Corinthians, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Co.5:20-21).

If sin is the manifestation of our unrighteousness and we can be saved only through righteousness that is not our own - the righteousness of Christ - then the ultimate sin is self-righteousness. Jesus did not reject sinners who came to Him for mercy and salvation; He rejected those who were too righteous in their own eyes to need grace. Jesus came to save sinners and not to save those righteous in their own eyes. No one is too lost to be saved; there are only those “too good to save”. In the Gospels, those who thought themselves most righteous were the ones condemned by our Lord as wicked and unrighteous.

If we are among those who have acknowledged our sin and trusted in the righteousness of Christ for our salvation, the righteousness of God is one of the great and comforting truths we should embrace. The justice of God means that when He establishes His Kingdom on earth, it will be a Kingdom characterized by justice. He will judge men in righteousness, and He will reign in righteousness.

We need not fret over the wicked of our day that seem to be getting away with sin. If we love righteousness, we most certainly dare not envy the wicked, whose day of
judgment awaits them (see Ps.37:73). Their day of judgment is rapidly coming upon them, and justice will prevail.

If we realize that true righteousness is not to be judged according to external, legalistic standards and that judgment belongs to God, we dare not occupy ourselves in judging others (Mt.7:1). We should also realize that judgment begins at the “...house of God”, and thus we should be quick to judge ourselves and to avoid those sins which are an offense to the righteousness of God (1Pe.4:17; 1Co.11:31).

The doctrine of the righteousness of God means that we, as the children of God, should seek to conform to the ways of our heavenly Father. We should not seek to find revenge against those who sin against us, but leave vengeance to God (Ro.12:17-21). Rather than seeking to get even, let us suffer the injustice of men, even as our Lord Jesus, that God might even bring our enemies to repentance and salvation (Mt.5:43-44; 1Pe.2:18-25). And let us pray, as our Lord instructed us, that the day when righteousness reigns may come (Mt.6:10).

When God is angry, He is also righteous. The Bible does not teach us to be angry and sin because of it. Rather it teaches there are times we should be angry, like God, but not let our anger lead to sin. There is a righteous anger, which is not sinful. Sometimes we sin by not becoming angry because of sin (Ro.4:9-12).

F. Obtaining Righteousness

There is much confusion in the world surrounding the matter of salvation and getting right with God. The Bible is crystal clear in this area, yet there are groups that say baptism is a requirement for salvation. Others tell us that we must belong to their denomination or group if we hope to be saved. Still others claim that we must keep certain sacraments, or holy ordinances, if we expect to get to Heaven. If we listen to every voice, we would be in a terrible fix and would never know where we stood with God. All we would know is that no matter what we did in trying to be saved, whether by works, money, or any other way, it is never enough.

That is the attitude Paul was combating in this chapter of Romans. He had just told the Jews that getting right with God was simply a matter of faith. He told them that salvation does not rest in one’s obedience to the Law. Neither does it rely on one’s good works. He tells us that the blessings of justification, righteousness, salvation, forgiveness, etc., are all given to us free and clear when we trust Christ as our personal Savior. After telling the Jews that the Law cannot save and that works will not bring salvation either, he proceeded to tell them that circumcision also would not get them to Heaven. If the Law, our works and circumcision will not help them to be right with God, then what will? That is the question Paul answered in these verses. Let us look together at them as we think about how righteousness is obtained.
1. The confusion;

Paul anticipated the objections of his Jewish audience and began to address the issue of circumcision. Obviously, the Jewish people attached far more significance to circumcision than we do in our day and time. For them, circumcision had come to be the mark of salvation in a man's life. For us, it is merely a medical procedure that is performed a few days after a male child is born, for the purpose of good hygiene. The Jews, on the other hand, attached great meaning to the rite of circumcision. For instance, Rabbi Menachem wrote, “Our rabbis have said that no circumcised man will ever see hell.” Others said, “Abraham sits before the gate of Hell, and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there.” In other words, they attached their eternal security to the rite of circumcision. Some Jews went so far as to teach that even if a man committed idolatry, God would have to supernaturally remove his circumcision in order for that man to go to Hell.

The whole point here is that, for the Jews, circumcision was far more that a rite; it was the point of entrance into a living and true relationship with God. They were sincere about it, but they were sincerely wrong. Why did they attach such meaning to circumcision? Perhaps it would help us to understand just what circumcision said to the Jewish male. Circumcision told the Jewish male three things. They are:

a. His body was permanently marked;

Once it was done, circumcision could not be undone. This served as a permanent reminder of his relationship with the Lord.

b. His body was privately marked;

The Jewish male might live anyway he pleased. He might serve other gods and indulge to the fullest in gross sin and wickedness. However, every time he undressed, he was reminded that he belonged to the Lord God. Other people might never see the sign, but the circumcised man never got away from the fact that he was a marked man.

c. His body was powerfully marked;

If a Jew were to commit adultery with a pagan woman, he would be reminded of his relationship with God. In the most intimate and personal manner, the Jew would be reminded of his standing with God several times per day.

We see the same kind of mind-set active in our world today. It is not about circumcision, but people attach spiritual significance to rituals like baptism,
communion, good works, etc. The bottom line is that many people are confused about this matter of salvation and how to obtain righteousness.

2. The clarification;

Paul took steps to set the record straight. Paul, without mincing any words, said Abraham was saved by faith alone. It was not works, it was not Law and it was not the rite and ritual of circumcision. It was purely by faith. He had believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Ge.15:6).

Nothing has changed in this arena. Salvation is by faith for everyone who gets saved. It can come about no other way (Ep.2:8-9). We need to be sure that we are trusting Jesus Christ by faith and through faith alone. Anything else is a recipe for disaster.

The clarification is in the Book of Genesis. When we read it, we see clearly that Abraham was saved by faith at the age of 85 (Ge.15:6). However, he was not circumcised until he was 99 years of age (Ge.17:1-14). Even though the Jews believed that circumcision was required for salvation, the very man they revered so highly was set right with God, by faith, long before he was circumcised.

As with Abraham, salvation never has been about what we do; it has always been about Who we belong to. If we belong to the Lord, then we are saved, forgiven, adopted into the family of God and declared righteous. If we have not trusted the Lord by faith, then we are lost, no matter what we do.

The whole point of this is to tell men that salvation cannot be found in the rabbi's knife, the baptismal pool, communion, church membership, confirmation, etc. Salvation can and will continue to be found only in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men are still saved by trusting His shed blood and His resurrection from the dead. Nothing else will save (Ac.16:31). This point is proven by taking a moment to look at two men in the Bible.

a. The thief on the cross;

In Luke 23:39-43, we see a man who trusted Jesus Christ for his salvation and he was saved. Yet he never went to church, never sang in a choir, never witnessed, never gave tithe and he was never baptized. This man did nothing but trust Jesus for salvation and he was saved. All the things he never got to do are things we should all do, but not one of those things can save a man's soul. He was made right purely by faith in Christ, as he spoke, “…Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”
b. Judas Iscariot;

In John 6:66-71, we see that Judas lived and walked with Jesus for over three years. He was active in our Lord's ministry (Mt.5:5-10). Yet Jesus Himself looked at Judas and said that he was a lost sinner. Thus we can see that it is not about the things we do, but is all about Who we know and receive as our Savior. We need to know Jesus Christ, for He alone is the Door to salvation (Jn.10:7, 9).

G. The Plan for Receiving Righteousness

Paul moved from defending his position on salvation through faith to telling the Jews how one demonstrates that he possesses righteousness. There are two points that Paul makes here that must be noted:

1. Circumcision is a sign;

The ritual cutting of the flesh was to serve as a reminder to the Jews that they were in a vital relationship with God and that they were to demonstrate the truth of that relationship by walking with Him in faith, day by day. A sign has value because it points the way we should go to reach a desired destination. The same is true of circumcision. It was not the relationship, but it reminded the Jew that he belonged to God.

2. Circumcision is a seal;

A seal is something that is usually placed on a document and tells everyone who looks at it that it is the real deal. Basically, circumcision was meant to serve as a reminder to the Jew that he was supposed to walk in humble submission with the Lord. It was to be an outward symbol of an inward relationship, much the same as baptism.

Circumcision only had value as long as it was accompanied by a heart walking in surrender and obedience to the Lord. So it is with all the religious stuff we do in this life. It only has value for us when our hearts are already right with God through salvation, which comes by faith. These truths are clearly illustrated by the wedding ring. The ring is a symbol of a husband’s commitment to his wife. When people see it, they know that he is married. They can see, without even knowing a thing about him, that he is not a free man. It is a public sign that he belongs to another. Now, if that husband slides that ring off, does he become single? No! He is just as married whether he has the ring on his finger or not. He wears it because it is a public symbol of his commitment to his wife.

Just for a moment, suppose some single guy puts on that husband’s wedding band. Does that mean that he is married to that man’s wife? No, he would just be wearing the symbol of a commitment that he had never made. We can see here the
comparison between the illustration of the wedding band and someone who has
never been saved, but has been baptized and is an active church member. It just
does not work unless it is done the Lord's way.

H. Salvation's Proof

Salvation is proved by what we believe, because what we believe will produce our
actions. With that in mind, does the uncircumcised Gentile have a right to call
Abraham “father?” Yes, but only if he has the same kind of faith that Abraham had.
It all boils down to what or who we are trusting in for our salvation. When the Lord
Jesus stood before Pilate, Pilate asked the assembled crowds this question, “What
shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Mt.27:22). The crowd
responded that day by telling Pilate to crucify Jesus. We should look at what our
response would have been to that question, under those conditions.

Salvation is proved by how we behave. What about the Jew? Does he have the
right to claim Abraham as his spiritual father? Again, the answer is yes, but only if
he can demonstrate the same kind of faith that Abraham lived out day by day. The
whole point here is that if we are really walking in faith, then our life will show it. We
will prove that we are saved, not by what we say, but rather by what we do
(Ja.2:18).

It must have been a shock for the Jews to hear that Abraham was made right with
God by faith before he was ever circumcised. After all, he was just a dirty Gentile
until he received the rite of circumcision. What these Jews failed to realize is that
before Abraham was circumcised in his flesh, God has already circumcised his
heart. And, that is the circumcision that really matters (Ro.2:28-29).

I. Value of Righteous Living

Solomon, to whom God gave great wisdom, said, “Righteousness exalteth a nation:
but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pr.14:34). Solomon learned the value of
righteous living. He came to recognize that only in God can a man find real
significance and lasting satisfaction. That is the legacy Solomon wished to leave
behind to subsequent generations who earnestly search for life's highest good.
Though Solomon failed in following the Lord's command concerning strange
women, he wrote in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “Fear God and keep his
commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ec.12:13).

The word “righteousness” is translated from the Greek, dikaiosune, and is defined
as “the character or quality of being right or just.” It was formerly translated and
spoken in the Old English as “rightwiseness,” which clearly expresses the meaning.
"Righteousness embraces the idea of the right knowledge in the mind, leading to
the right action in life” (W.F. Vine). Hence, righteousness is doing right and refers to
the state of one who is such as he ought to be before God and man.
We can know what is right, know what we ought to be and do, only as God reveals in His inspired Word. Paul taught that God's plan for making a man righteous is revealed in the Gospel (Ro.1:16-17). Peter taught that “...in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Ac.10:35). The Psalmist revealed that God's “...commandments are righteousness” (Ps.119:12).

1. Value of righteous living to Noah;

Noah was “...a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Ge.6:9). Noah's righteous conduct, amidst wickedness (Ge.6:5), caused him to find “...grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Ge.6:8). Noah's righteousness was demonstrated in the fact that he did “...all that God commanded him” (Ge.6:22). While every living substance was destroyed upon the face of the ground, righteous Noah and his family, were saved (1Pe.3:20).

2. Value of righteous living to Abraham;

The Scripture says, “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God” (Ja.2:23). Abraham was justified by his works and by works his faith was made perfect (Ja.2:21-22). Abraham's supreme test of righteousness came during his mature life in his willingness to offer up Isaac, his only son, whom he loved passionately and in whom all his expectations centered (Ge.22:1-10; He.11:17-18). Righteousness is seldom easy, but through Abraham's faith he became the friend of God and the family line through whom Jesus, the Savior, came (Ge.3:15; Ga.3:16).

3. Value of righteous living to the city of Sodom;

The value of righteous living can be seen when we consider that ten righteous souls would have delivered the ancient city of Sodom (Ge.18:23-32). Since less than ten righteous people could be counted, two angels went to Sodom to visit and warn Lot of the impending destruction (Ge.19:1, 12-13). “The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire... and he overthrew those cities” (Ge.19:24-28). Sodom's wickedness and moral depravity even became proverbial (Ro.9:29; 11:8). Righteous living would have spared the now “lost” city of Sodom.

4. Value of righteous living to Israel;

Righteousness had/has the power to strengthen and exalt the nation of Israel. As long as Israel was righteous, no power could overthrow them, and other nations would say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (De.4:6). God watched over Israel (De.32:10) and assured those living righteously of His blessing (De.11:26-28).
Righteousness was the basis of God's dealing with other nations (Je.18:1-10). Where are the ancient nations? Where are the great empires of Assyria, Babylon and Persia? Their sin and unrighteousness worked their ruin.

5. Value of righteous living today;

As demonstrated in the past, righteous living is and will always be of great value. The value of righteousness today is seen in the fact that:

a. Righteousness gives us access to God. When we do right, or live according to the Gospel of Christ, God's eyes are over us; His ears are open to our prayers (1Pe.3:12; Pr.15:9).

b. Righteousness bears good fruit (Pr.11:30). Righteous living is not only profitable to us, but to others. We can win others to Christ through righteous living. Jesus taught that His disciples are the “...salt of the earth” and the “...light of the world” (Mt.5:13-14). Further, the work of the righteous is peace (Is.32:17). No money on earth can buy true peace. True peace comes only to the righteous.

c. Righteousness will be crowned. Since Paul “...kept the faith” there was laid up for him a “...crown of righteousness” (2Ti.4:8). The righteous can “...look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death” (Pr.12:28).

Righteous living, amidst wickedness, is the only thing that will mean anything eternally. We will either die the death of the righteous or the death of the wicked (Nu.23:10; Ezk.33:11).
Part III
Covenants

I. COVENANTS- GOD’S AGREEMENT

If a pastor is to be a theologian, he should have a working understanding of the principle of “covenant” as we see it in Scripture. In the American Heritage Dictionary, a covenant is defined as “a formal and binding agreement between two or more persons or parties.” In modern society we would probably simply call it a contract. Yet covenant is a very intimate kind of contract. The basic theme of such a covenant is: “What is mine is yours. What is yours is mine. I will do everything I can to support and care for you even to the point of death.” This is the type of agreement we are in with the One Most High. He has already shown that He will die for us; can we say we would do the same for Him?

Something to remember is why covenants are made. The basic motivation of a covenant is love. Elohim, the Supreme God, loves us and wants to care for us and have relationship with us. We also are to love Him and should want to have relationship with Him. But how do we do that when He is so much greater than us? He formed a Covenant with us explaining how this is done.

A. Different Types of Covenants

There are many different types and levels of covenants. We are only going to look at a few of those most commonly seen in the Scriptures. The first type is called a “royal grant.” The royal grant is a covenant made by only one side of those involved and is typically unconditional. Examples of this include the promises God made:
1) to Noah that He shall never again flood the world; 2) to the priest, Phineas, to have an everlasting priesthood; 3) to David that he would have a Descendent on the throne forever. There is nothing required of the second party in this type of agreement and therefore nothing that the second party does can change it.

The second type is a king/subject or king/vassal covenant, where there is a greater and a lesser partner. For example, a king promises protection and care of an individual if the individual will help support the king with food or with manpower in a time of war. This type of covenant is often a conditional agreement. If either side breaks the requirements, then the other party is released. We see God made this type of covenant with Abraham and again later with Israel at Mt. Sinai. The basis of this covenant was that if they would be His people by obeying Him, then He would be their Mighty One.

The third type is a person to person or group to group covenant where all involved are equals. This type also tends to be conditional and can be broken by either party. In the Bible, an example of this would be David and Jonathan with their promise to help and care for each other, something that proved difficult under Saul's hatred for David.
B. Making of a Covenant

Covenants have been made in many different ways, but the most common is the verbal or the ceremonial agreement which includes what is expected of both partners. Nowhere do we see all of these customs used together in one ceremony, but the following are a few of the symbols used in the Scriptures.

1. The cutting of an animal;

The cutting of a covenant is well-known in Scripture. In this action, an animal was cut into two pieces and the individuals making the covenant came together between the pieces and proclaimed that if they did not keep the covenant, may they be cut up like these animals. We should keep in mind here that oaths, blessings, and cursing all have their effect in both the physical and the spiritual, so this was no light thing to say. When God made His Covenant with Abram, it was somewhat unique in that only Elohim went through the cut animal pieces ... in essence making it a one-sided Covenant promise. God was saying that if He did not keep His promise to Abram, He should be cut up just as the animals were.

2. The blood covenant;

Another type is a blood covenant which included one's direct descendants or bloodline. Because this type of covenant included a person's descendants, it comes close to paternity, literally defined as “under the girdle.” This paternal aspect helps to explain why circumcision became a symbol of the Covenant with Abraham and the nation that was to come from him. In this type covenant, one was ready to give not just one's own life, but also that which was dearer than one's own life to help another. That was part of the testing when God asked for the sacrifice of Isaac, to see if Abraham would genuinely love God so much as to give up his son. Making a covenant genuinely meant withholding nothing from the partner.

3. Exchange of an item;

With Jonathan and David we see the exchanging of robes. They gave their love to each other which was a greater love than to their own family. They went a step further and exchanged their weapons, which showed their agreement to be protection for each other. We have the same thing happen when we enter into Covenant with Messiah. We are clothed in His righteousness and receive His power for our protection. When the enemy attacks us, God’s weapons are at our disposal for He is on our side. Conversely, we are on His side and should be ready to uphold His name and act for Him as well.
4. Judgment within a covenant;

We should realize that typically there is no room for mercy in a covenant. When one side fails to keep their side of the covenant, there is punishment waiting. However, the Father is merciful. He makes provision for mercy through the atonement. When someone would sin, under the law, that action or failure could be placed upon an animal and it would be torn up (sacrificed) instead. Jesus’ atonement on the cross was another great act of mercy, fulfilling the New Covenant with man and is the greatest act of mercy possible. Humans have broken the Covenant of Grace many times. Were it not for the mercy of God, we would be long gone as the Covenant would have been made null and void. But through His love, it continues.

Bible history reveals the Jews were not always faithful to God. Church history confirms the same is true of Christians. Human beings, no matter what denomination or independent church they are part of, are capable of adjusting or distorting their understanding of God’s will for expedient social purposes. But, deviant understanding and action has no effect on God’s truth. God’s truth is everlasting. Civilizations come and go, but God and His truth remain forever.

So, what was nailed to the cross? In a sentence, two covenants were nailed to the cross. One covenant was given to Adam and Eve, the second was given to the biological descendants of Abraham (Ge.15:18; Ex.24:1-8; De.31:16; Je.11:10; 31:31-34; Ep.2; Co.2:13-17). When those covenants became null and void at the cross, two things changed. Animal sacrifices were no longer necessary, and all distinction between Jews and Gentiles came to an end. Paul wrote, “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (Ro.10:12, 13). After the cross, salvation came through faith in Jesus Christ, for “…whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn.3:16).

To understand the two covenants that were made null and void at the cross, a person has to understand God’s use of covenants in the Bible. Unfortunately, many Christians do not concern themselves with the basics on this subject and this explains why there is so much confusion. A pastor who functions as a theologian will straighten this situation out. It is not necessary to be confused on this topic, since the Bible provides the answer.

II. UNILATERAL AND BILATERAL COVENANTS

God functioned in the Scriptures with two types of covenants: unilateral and bilateral. A unilateral covenant is a one-sided covenant which God imposes upon Himself and/or man. A bilateral covenant is a two-sided covenant or a mutually agreed upon covenant between God and man. Both types of covenants require a continuous relationship between God and man and have conditions within them, giving them the effect and the appearance of
law. But, a covenant is more than a set of laws. A covenant requires an ongoing relationship between God and man, whereas a law does not. For example, the law of gravity is not a covenant because there is no intelligent relationship between gravity and man. A law is an authoritative statement and a covenant may have certain laws or authoritative statements within it.

The quality of a covenant relationship is determined by love and affection. When both parties are happy in a mutually agreed upon covenant, the covenant is wonderful. However, if disaffection should arise between the parties, the covenant becomes a terrible bondage for both parties. This can be seen in that some marriages begin so happily and end so miserably. Obviously, the marriage covenant did not change. There was a change in affection which brought about a change in the relationship. How long should a mutually binding covenant be honored when there is no love in the heart of one party? Certainly God will have to judge that, but also the fact that He hates the breaking of a covenant makes it a serious event to divorce.

A. Contrasting the Covenants

A unilateral covenant is one-sided and nonnegotiable. It is not a mutual agreement between God and man. God’s unilateral covenants are imposed on Himself or man for as long as He deems necessary. That is why it is called unilateral or one-sided. On the other hand, a bilateral covenant is a mutually agreed covenant between God and man. A bilateral covenant has a set of rules or laws that are binding upon both parties. A bilateral covenant is drawn up and put into effect for mutually beneficial purposes and it remains in effect for as long as the covenant stipulates. The terms and conditions set forth in a bilateral covenant can transfer to succeeding generations. A bilateral covenant comes to an end when: a) either party is unfaithful to the agreement; b) when the object for which the covenant was created is fulfilled.

Marriage is a bilateral covenant, where two people fall in love and they willingly agree to honor vows of moral fidelity and faithfulness “until death do us part.” The exchange of vows constitutes a mutual agreement and the marriage covenant is put into effect before witnesses. At death, the marriage covenant is terminated because all that was promised has been fulfilled.

Similarly, if a builder and a customer enter into an agreement to build a new house, the bilateral covenant between them ends when the house is finished because the covenant is fulfilled. When the purpose of the covenant is fulfilled, the covenant expires. To be legal, bilateral covenants require witnesses. In ancient times, if third-party witnesses were not available when a bilateral covenant was made, inanimate objects such as stones were stacked into a large pile as a witness to the agreement (Ge.31:44-48).
B. Covenant Definitions

If a person enters into a contract with a realtor to sell his house, the realtor’s contract will state certain matters (covenant laws) which the seller and the realtor are expected to honor by obedience to them. The contract goes into effect when both parties sign or ratify the contract. We may use the word “contract” to describe this relationship, but in a biblical sense the contract between the seller and the realtor is a bilateral covenant because a relationship exists for the duration of the contract.

Even though the contract has a number of covenant laws or performance specifications in it, we know that compliance with the terms of a covenant is something else. The realtor may not meet the expectations of the seller; he may not promote the property as specified or the realtor may not represent the seller’s best interest in selling the property. Likewise, the seller may refuse to meet certain demands set forth in the contract. The point is that all bilateral covenants are performance-based covenants entered into on the basis of “good faith” from the moment they begin. A bilateral covenant becomes necessary when two parties need each other to accomplish something one party cannot do alone. The hope and expectation of both parties at the beginning of a bilateral covenant is superior performance out of each other.

Many people get married each year in the United States. The marriage covenant is a bilateral covenant. At last count, the number of people in the United States terminating the marriage covenant each year is about half of the number getting married. So, even though two people may enter into the marriage covenant, neither party loses its right to abandon the covenant if the performance of the other party does not meet the specifications of the covenant. Of course there can be serious consequences for choosing to violate the terms and conditions of a mutually agreed upon covenant. Besides that, a marriage covenant is not just a legal contract, for It calls upon God as witness and to break covenant with Him is an extremely serious matter (Lev.26:15-39).

A bilateral or two sided covenant can be declared null and void if there is evidence affirming that one party violated the laws or stipulations within the covenant. But, unilateral covenants are not declared null and void if they are violated. For example, when Adam and Eve sinned, they came under the condemnation of a unilateral covenant which stated: “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Ge.2:17). Because that covenant required their death, and God knew they would fail in this, His had laid out from eternity past the plan for Jesus to die that man might be redeemed. In other words, someone had to die to pay the penalty for sin because the unilateral covenant could not be declared null and void. “The wages of sin is death....” (Ro.6:23) This is a fundamental covenant of the universe and it cannot be altered.
C. Unilateral Covenants

With these definitions in mind, let us consider five unilateral covenants that were put in place before Moses went up Mt. Sinai to meet with God.

1. Unilateral: “Do not eat of the tree”;

At the time of Creation, God commanded Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for if he did he would certainly die (Ge.2:17). According to divine wisdom and sovereign authority, God imposed this unilateral covenant upon Adam and Eve before sin began and it was nonnegotiable.

A unilateral covenant is not a mutual covenant. When God imposed this Covenant upon Adam, He spoke to Adam who was designated as the father or federal head of the human race. Eve had not been created yet. In other words, this unilateral Covenant rested upon Adam and all of Adam’s offspring that were forthcoming. In a sense, even Eve is considered an offspring of Adam since she was made from Adam’s rib. When Eve was deceived and disobeyed that Covenant, she came under its condemnation even though God spoke the Covenant to Adam. Adam, we know, willfully violated that Covenant and due to the tenants of the Covenant, God had no choice; the conditions of the Covenant condemned Adam to death just like Eve. But, Jesus spared their lives and of all humanity by stepping “in the way” of the executing angel when He offered to die in their place.

2. Unilateral: “I will put enmity”;

After Adam and Eve sinned, God announced another unilateral covenant to man. He declared that: a) He would put enmity between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman; b) He, the Messiah, would someday crush the head of the serpent even though the serpent would strike His heel (Ge.3:14-15). God imposed that covenant upon Himself. We should carefully notice that that covenant is not dependent upon the cooperation or agreement of man. That covenant declares the forthcoming actions of God. That covenant was partially fulfilled when Christ died on the cross (Co.2:15). It will be fulfilled to its terminal point when Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire at the end of the one thousand year Millennial Reign (Re.20).

3. Unilateral: “…destroy those who commit murder”;

Soon after the flood waters subsided, God declared a third unilateral covenant to Noah. “And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man.”
“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man” (Ge.9:5-6).

This covenant was unilaterally imposed upon Noah and his offspring and it declares man’s accountability to God. Notice that death by execution in the event of murder is a unilateral decree. God did not negotiate with Noah (compare Ge.9:5-6 and Nu.35:33). God left no wiggle room on this subject. God has imposed accountability on every beast and on every person and He declares that murderers must be executed.

4. Unilateral: “Never again”;

A fourth unilateral covenant was also given to Noah right after the flood. God declared, “Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood” (Ge.9:9-17). Notice again that this covenant is one-sided. This covenant is binding upon God, not man, and God has faithfully honored this covenant for some 4,500 years.

5. The fifth unilateral covenant;

In Genesis 12 and 13, we find a compelling story of faith. God selected a man who was eager to follow Him and obey His commandments. Abram was a man of deep faith in God. God gave a unilateral Covenant to Abram, but in his humanness he tried to help God out at times. Abraham (Abram) died without seeing all the things that God promised him, but Abraham will live again and he will see everything God promised to him. God promised a childless Abraham three things:

a. Through Abraham, all nations of the Earth would be blessed;

b. Abraham’s descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky;

c. God would give Abraham and his heirs a specific section of land (Ge.13:14-17; 15:5).

The unilateral Covenant God gave Abram was not conditional nor was it based on mutual agreement. God honored Abraham’s faith by granting a unilateral covenant to him. We find the same to be true for a few other people of faith in the Bible, such as king Hezekiah and king David. God promised Hezekiah that he would live 15 more years and God promised David that His throne would remain forever (1Kg.2:4; 2Kg.20:6; 2Sa.17:16). The unilateral Covenant God gave Abraham was implemented because of sin. As the first man of the human race, Adam was to be the "great-grandfather" of billions of sinless beings, but he forfeited that honor when he sinned.
After the flood, God started over by honoring Abraham’s faith, declaring him to be the father of all who would live by faith. However, the unilateral Covenant which God gave to Abraham still awaits completion. Notice this text: “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (which promise still stands, see Ga.3:29). This verse, written about 30 years after Jesus died on the cross, confirms three things:

a. God reckons all people who put their faith in Christ to be children of Abraham or his heirs;

b. The time and setting of this verse confirm that the covenant given to Abraham was in effect after the cross;

c. This text indicates that anyone can become Abraham’s heir through faith in Jesus (Ep.2; Ro.2:28-29; 9:6-7).

So, the unilateral Covenant God gave Abraham still stands and as far as God is concerned, the offspring of Abraham are those people who put their faith in Christ.

Faith in God has always been the core issue for salvation from the initial action of sin, but the biological offspring of Israel stubbornly refused to comprehend this point (Je.3:20; He.4). Rebellion is the opposite of obedient faith and because of rebellion, God finally allowed Jerusalem to be destroyed in 70 AD. But, Abraham will receive everything that God promised to him because God redeemed Israel at the cross. The Israel of God is those who believe in Christ (Ro.9-11; Ep.2; Ga.3-4; Ja.1:1).

At the end of the 1,000 year Millennial Reign, the unilateral Covenant God cut with Abraham will be seen as fulfilled. At that time everyone will see that all nations were blessed through Abraham, for the Savior of the world came through the lineage of Abraham. Second, at that time the saints will be a numberless multitude, numbering more than the stars in the sky. Last, when the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descends from God out of Heaven, it will rest upon the specific land that God promised to give to Abraham and his offspring. (Zec.14; Re.21).

Abraham well understood the curse of sin. He knew God’s Covenant included more than merely living in the land of Canaan. That is why the Bible says Abraham, and his descendants were looking for a city whose builder and maker is God (He.11:10). By faith, Abraham could see beyond the curse of sin. He was looking for a New Heaven and a New Earth. So, be assured that the unilateral Covenant God cut with Abraham will be fulfilled because God always keeps His Word.
In review, the five unilateral Covenants all predate Mt. Sinai by hundreds of years, and are:

1. “Do not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil;”

2. “I will put enmity between the serpent and the woman and will one day send a Savior;”

3. “I will demand an accounting for each man’s life. Murderers are to be put to death;”

4. “I will not destroy the world again with a flood;”

5. To Abraham:
   a. “Through you, all nations will be blessed;”
   b. “I will make you the father of many nations;”
   c. “I will give you and your descendants this land.”

D. Bilateral Covenants

The bilateral covenant is a covenant which has mutual responsibilities. The first bilateral covenant offered to man after the fall was given in veiled language even before the eviction from the Garden of Eden.

1. Bilateral: “If you will be My people;”

Although Genesis 3 does not say this in the clearest of terms, God offered a bilateral or a two-sided covenant to fallen man before He evicted them from the Garden of Eden (Ge.3:15, 21). The silver lining of that dark day is that God offered man a way back home if he wanted to return. It may take 7,000 years to restore man to his Garden home, but returning home, in its fullness, is what God intends and is possible. This Covenant can be summarized with words that God has used in various places in the Bible; “If you will be my people and show faith in me by obeying me, I will be your Salvation” (see Ex.6:7; 19:5-6; Je.7:23; Ezk.36:28; Re.21:7).

Because bilateral covenants are performance based, notice the conditional element in this bilateral Covenant- “If you will be my people....” It is apparent from Genesis 3 that Adam and Eve accepted the Covenant. The Lord ratified this Covenant by conducting the first animal sacrifice to demonstrate the penalty and payment for sin (Ge.3:21). The killing of a flawless lamb was a shadow of the death of man’s Creator in man’s place. After slaying the lamb, the Lord covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skin of the lamb.
This is a beautiful object lesson showing how God would cover man’s sin through the blood sacrifice of animals, until the Lamb of God would come and take sin upon Himself for all mankind, so that we could be made the righteousness of Christ (Ro.3:21-22; 2Co.5:21).

This bilateral Covenant, which was offered in perpetuity to Adam and Eve and their descendants, is one of the two covenants that were nailed to the cross. When Jesus died, the requirement for animal sacrifices – established in the Garden of Eden – came to an end. This bilateral Covenant between God and man was fulfilled and a fulfilled covenant is a finished covenant. A New bilateral Covenant was implemented at the cross which is based on the blood of Jesus.

2. Abel’s sacrifice;

Because the blood of Jesus would have to be shed to bring about man’s restoration, God mandated that animal blood be periodically shed until Christ’s blood could be shed (Ge.4:4). Animal sacrifices served as a symbolic reminder of the price of salvation. We know this to be true because of Abel’s approved offering and subsequent death (He.11:4; 12:24; 1Jn.3:12).

Although Cain could actually see into the Garden of Eden, he was so rebellious that he would not submit to the terms and conditions that God required to return there. His refusal to offer the prerequisite blood sacrifice, bringing instead what came from the ground and by his own efforts in agriculture, caused God to refuse to honor Cain’s offering. As Abel obediently presented the prerequisite sacrifices, God commended him causing Cain to go deeper and deeper into a jealous rage. No doubt Cain felt that God had embarrassed him, the firstborn of mankind, in front of his younger brother. Finally, Cain vented his rage toward God and Abel by killing Abel.

For 4,000 years, from Adam to the time of Christ, everyone wanting salvation had to submit to the requirements of the first bilateral covenant God gave to Adam and Eve. Noah obediently submitted to that requirement (Ge.8:20-21). Remember that everyone prior to the flood, with the exception of Enoch, who offered an animal sacrifice went to their death without receiving what was promised (He.11:39-40). Salvation is granted to no one on the basis of obedience. Obedience can be the result of faith or obedience can be the result of conformity. In other words, a person can offer animal sacrifices because it is “the religious thing to do,” but that is not faith. Faith is most clearly revealed when obedience comes with a penalty. In Abel’s case, it cost him his life.
3. Bilateral Covenant expanded at Sinai;

The bilateral covenant which God offered to Adam and Eve was in effect for 4,000 years, but was only valid until Jesus died on the cross. The slaying of animals was an act of faith for 40 centuries. The slaying of sacrificial animals, according to the requirements that God established, was an expression of faith. Faith renders obedience, while presumption excuses transgression. At Mt. Sinai, God offered the descendants of Abraham a bilateral covenant. That covenant was an enhanced and expanded version of the bilateral covenant that He had offered to Adam and Eve. The covenant which God offered to the offspring of Abraham at Mt. Sinai was not entirely new nor was it entirely unique. Instead, it was a repetition and enlargement of certain issues that had been extended to the human race through Adam and Eve. The bilateral covenant offered to Israel included certain new features for Israel, such as the privilege of being a kingdom of priests to God, but it remained a conditional two-sided covenant; “If you will be my people, then I will be your God” (Le.26; De.28-30).

E. Dispensationalism

There are those who teach that a misunderstanding of God’s covenants has led to the rise of a concept called dispensationalism. Some proponents of dispensationalism teach that salvation is offered to man in different ways at different times. Dispensationalists have a point, though some do not explain their message accurately. It is true that God has required people at different times to do different things. For example, prior to the death of Jesus, all who chose to accept the terms of the original bilateral covenant were required to offer animal sacrifices – from Adam down to the time of Christ. But, the offering of animal sacrifices did not nor has it ever provided salvation (He.10:4). Sacrificial animals have never changed the means to salvation (Ep.2:8-9). Faith in the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ has always been and will always be the prerequisite for salvation.

1. History of dispensationalism;

There is continued disagreement over the origin of dispensationalism. Some hold that the basic beliefs of dispensationalism were a part of what the apostles and the first generation Church believed. Others, usually not of a dispensationalist leaning, argue that dispensationalism is a new theology, circa 19th century. Dispensationalism, as a system, began to take shape in the mid-1800s.

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), was one who began the systematization of dispensationalism. He was a Plymouth Brethren minister who studied at Trinity College in Dublin (1819). While there, he came to believe in a future salvation and the restoration of national Israel, based on his study of Isaiah 32. His conclusion was that Israel, in a future dispensation, would enjoy
earthly blessings different from the blessings which would be experienced by the Church. He saw a clear distinction between Israel and the Church and believed in an “any moment” rapture of the Church, which would be followed by Daniel’s 70th Week, wherein Israel would take center stage again in God’s plan. Following this, he believed in a Millennial Kingdom in which God would fulfill His unconditional promises with Israel.

It is likely that Darby advanced understanding of dispensationalism by noting that in each dispensation, God places man under some condition and responsibility. Also, he saw that there was a failure by man in each dispensation. Darby saw seven dispensations: 1) From the Garden to the Flood; 2) Noahic; 3) Abrahamic; 4) time of Israel; 5) times of the Gentiles; 6) time of the Spirit; 7) time of the Millennium. Darby testified that his dispensational theology was fully formed by 1833.

Dispensationalism first took shape in the Brethren Movement in early 19th century Britain. Those within the Brethren Movement rejected a special role for ordained clergy, stressing the spiritual giftedness of ordinary believers and their freedom, under the Spirit’s guidance, to teach and admonish each other from Scripture; also known as the priesthood of all believers. These writings of the Brethren impacted evangelical Protestantism as well as influenced ministers in the United States such as D. L. Moody, James Brookes, J. R. Graves, A. J. Gordon, and C. I. Scofield.

Bible Conferences began in the 1870s which helped spread dispensationalism in the U.S.A. The American Bible and Prophetic Conferences, meeting from 1878—1914, promoted dispensational theology. The Bible Institute Movement of the late 1800s saw the founding of several Bible institutes that taught dispensational theology. These included the Nyack Bible Institute (1882), Boston Missionary Training School (1889), and Moody Bible Institute (1889).

The Scofield Reference Bible was edited by C. I. Scofield, a participant in the above mentioned conferences, who formed a board of Bible conference teachers in 1909 and produced the Scofield Reference Bible. Theological annotations next to the Scriptures were the highlight of this Bible and it became a great influence in the spread of dispensationalism.

After World War I, many dispensational Bible schools were formed, including Dallas Theological Seminary (1924). Dispensationalism began to be promoted in formal, academic settings. Under Scofield, dispensationalism entered a scholastic period that was later carried on by his successor, Lewis Sperry Chafer. Further promotion of dispensationalism took place with the writing of Chafer’s eight-volume Systematic Theology.
2. Features of dispensationalism;

A hermeneutical approach, that stresses a literal fulfillment of Old Testament promises to Israel, is a prominent feature of dispensationalism. While literal interpretation is still debated, many dispensationalists claim that consistent literal interpretation should be applied to the whole Bible, including Old Testament promises to Israel. Dispensationalists usually say that the progress of revelation, including New Testament revelation, does not cancel Old Testament promises made with national Israel. There is considerable debate concerning how much the Church is related to the Old Testament covenants and promises, but dispensationalists believe national Israel will receive literal fulfillment of the promises made to her in the Old Testament.

Another feature of dispensationalism is the belief that the unconditional, eternal Covenants made with national Israel (Abrahamic, Davidic, and New) must be fulfilled literally with national Israel. While the generally Gentile Church may participate in or have partially fulfilled the biblical covenants, they do not take over the covenants to the exclusion of national Israel. It is impossible for physical and spiritual promises to Israel be not fulfilled with Israel. To say that less than those promises and covenants be fulfilled is to say God is a liar, and of course we know that is not true.

This includes a distinct future for national Israel. John S. Feinberg says, “Only dispensationalism clearly sees a distinctive future for ethnic Israel as a nation.” This future includes a restoration of the nation with a distinct identity and function.

There has been considerable discussion about whether the Church is distinct from Israel or not. We can see no place that the Church replaces or is a continuance of Israel, and is never referred to as “Israel.” According to dispensationalists, the Church did not exist in the Old Testament, only coming into existence on the Day of Pentecost (Ac.2). Old Testament promises to Israel cannot then be entirely fulfilled with the Church.

Evidences which show that the Church is distinct from Israel include:

a) Jesus viewed the Church as future (Mt.16:18); b) Spirit baptism did not begin until the Day of Pentecost- an essential of the Church (see 1Co.12:13 and Ac.2); c) Christ became Head of the Church as a result of His resurrection (see Ep.4:15; Co.1:18 and Ep.1:19-23); d) the spiritual gifts associated with the Church were not given until the ascension of Christ (Ep.4:7-12; 1Co.12:11-13); e) the “new man” nature of the Church shows that the Church is a New Testament organism and not something incorporated into Israel (Ep.2:15); f) the foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ and the New Testament apostles and prophets (Ep.2:20); g) Luke always keeps Israel and the Church distinct in his writings. On this last point, Fruchtenbaum states, “In the Book of Acts, both Israel and the Church exist
simultaneously. The term Israel is used 20 times and *ekklesia* (called out ones- Church) 19 times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct."

There are multiple senses of the “…*seed of Abraham*” according to Feinberg. He says that the designation is used in different ways in Scripture:

- a. Used in reference to ethnic, biological Jews (Ro.9-11);
- b. Used in a political sense;
- c. Used in a spiritual sense to refer to people, whether Jew or Gentile, who are spiritually related to God by faith (Ro.4:11-12; Ga.3:7).

Feinberg argues that the spiritual sense of the title does not take over the physical sense to such an extent that the physical seed of Abraham is no longer related to the biblical covenants.

There is a philosophy of history that emphasizes both the spiritual and physical aspects of God's covenants according to John Feinberg. He says that,

“…non-dispensational treatments of the nature of the covenants and of Israel's future invariably emphasize soteriological and spiritual issues, whereas dispensational treatments emphasize both the spiritual/soteriological and the social, economic, and political aspects of things.”

Some other features that are significant to dispensationalism, though not necessarily exclusive, include: 1) the authority of Scripture; 2) belief in dispensations; 3) emphasis on Bible prophecy; 4) futuristic pre-millennialism; 5) pre-tribulationism; 6) a view of immanency that sees Christ's return as an "any-moment" possibility.

3. Variations within dispensationalism;

Not all proponents of dispensationalism agree on all features noted above. While these features characterize the beliefs of most, Blaizing writes, “Dispensationalism has not been a static tradition.” There is no standard creed that sets in place its theological development at some point in history. Blaizing offers three forms of dispensational thought:

- a. Classical dispensationalism (1850-1940s);

In classical dispensationalism, the views of British and American dispensationalists are seen. These are seen distinctly between the
writings of Darby and Chafer's eight-volume Systematic Theology. The Scofield Reference Bible’s interpretative notes can be seen as the key representation of the classical dispensational tradition.

Blaising said that one important feature of classical dispensationalism is its dualistic idea of redemption. In this tradition, God is seen as pursuing two different purposes: 1) related to heaven; 2) related to the earth. Blaising said that,

“heavenly humanity was to be made up of all the redeemed from all dispensations who would be resurrected from the dead. Whereas the earthly humanity concerned people who had not died but who were preserved by God from death, the heavenly humanity was made up of all the saved who had died, whom God would resurrect from the dead.”

Blaising said the heavenly, spiritual, and individualistic nature of the Church, in classical dispensationalism, underscores the well-known view that the Church is a “parenthesis” in the history of God’s redemption of man. In that tradition, there was little emphasis on social or political activity for the Church. During this timeframe, the key theologians were John Nelson Darby, C. I. Scofield, and Lewis Sperry Chafer.

b. Revised or modified dispensationalism (ca.1950-1985);

Dispensationalists of this era abandoned the eternal dualism of heavenly and earthly peoples. They emphasized two peoples of God-Israel and the Church. They say those two groups are structured differently with different dispensational roles and responsibilities, but the salvation they each receive is the same. The distinction between Israel and the Church, as different anthropological groups, will continue throughout eternity.

These revised dispensationalists often reject the idea that there are two New Covenants, one affecting Israel and the other affecting the Church. They also see the Church and Israel existing together during the Millennium and Eternal State. The key theologians of this era are John Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, Charles Ryrie, Charles Feinberg, and Alva J. McClain.

c. Progressive dispensationalism (1986-today);

“Progressive dispensationalism” refers to the progressive relationship of the successive dispensations to one another, according to Blaising and Bock. Charles Ryrie notes that, “The adjective ‘progressive’
refers to a central tenet that the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants are being progressively fulfilled today” (as well as having fulfillments in the Millennial Kingdom).

Blaising and Bock go on to say,

“One of the striking differences between progressive and earlier dispensationalists, is that progressives do not view the Church as an anthropological category in the same class as terms like Israel, Gentile Nations, Jews, and Gentile people. The Church is neither a separate race of humanity (in contrast to Jews and Gentiles), nor a competing nation alongside Israel and Gentile nations... The Church is precisely redeemed humanity itself (both Jews and Gentiles) as it exists in this dispensation prior to the coming of Christ” (Ep.2:12-16).

Most progressive dispensationalists see greater continuity between Israel and the Church than the previous variations within dispensationalism. They say that both Israel and the Church are the people of God and are both related to the blessings of the New Covenant. They also say that this spiritual equality does not mean that there are not functional distinctions between the groups. Most progressive dispensationalists do not equate the Church as Israel in this age, as some have claimed, and they still see a future distinct identity and function for ethnic Israel in the coming Millennial Kingdom. Progressive dispensationalists like Blaising and Bock see an "already/not yet aspect" to the Davidic reign of Christ. They say the Davidic reign will be inaugurated during the present Church Age. The total fulfillment of that reign awaits Israel in the Millennium, according to them. Key theologians of this era are Craig A. Blaising, Darrell L. Bock, and Robert L. Saucy.

F. Other Teachings on Dispensationalism

History is said to be divided into seven “dispensations” where God tests man's obedience differently. The present Church dispensation concerns Christians, mainly Gentiles, and is a parenthesis to God's plan of dealing with and blessing His chosen people, the Jews. Because of the Jews' rejection of Jesus, Jewish sovereignty over the promised earthly Kingdom of Jerusalem and Palestine was postponed from the time of Christ's first coming until prior to or just after His Second Coming when all Jews will embrace Him (Ro.11:26).

According to this view, there will be a rapture of the Gentile Church followed by the tribulation period of seven years' duration, during which the Antichrist will arise and Armageddon will occur. The Jewish Temple will be rebuilt at Jerusalem and the Temple mount, possibly in place of the Muslim Dome of the Rock, will be when the
The antichrist will proclaim himself as Christ. Three and a half years later, terminating the tribulation, Jesus will return visibly, physically to earth and reestablish the nation of Israel. Christ and the Redeemed Saints who come with Christ from heaven will rule over all the earth, from Jerusalem, for a thousand years, followed by the season of Satan’s last temptation, a battle that is very short-lived, and the placement of Satan in the Lake of Fire. Then the last judgment will take place, with a new heaven and new earth being brought about (Re.21:1).

This view is held largely by groups who believe the Scriptures to be inerrant. It is held by many Protestant groups who take what they believe is a more literal interpretation of the Bible, including many, but not all, Pentecostal, Charismatic and Baptist churches, along with many Independent and non-denominational churches, as well as a few of the Presbyterian churches and Wesleyan/Methodist churches. These views are also held by most groups that are labeled “fundamentalists.” The more politically active sections within this eschatological view often strongly support the Christian Zionism movement and the associated political, military and economic support for Israel which comes from certain groups within American politics and parts of the Christian right.

This view is also held in a modified form by groups such as the Latter Day Saints, Christadelphians and Adventist splinter groups such as the Branch Davidians, essentially now extinct, due to death of leadership and known followers at Waco, Texas. A siege of the splinter group from the Seventh Day Adventists (1955), the Branch Davidians, took place for 51 days, by officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), etc. when a fire broke out (set by the Davidians?) and David Koresh (formerly named Vernon Howell) and 82 others died, either from the fire or gunshot wounds. This event, in essence, ended the Branch Davidians.

One of the main tenets of Dispensationalism is the strict dichotomy that dispensationalists claim exists between Israel and the New Testament Church. This is expressly denied by Covenant Theologians who claim the existence of a relationship via “spiritual Israel.” A dispensationalist would claim that none of the prophecies pertaining to Israel are or will be fulfilled in or by the New Testament Church. Covenant Theologians claim that some of the prophecies pertaining to Israel are, will, or may be fulfilled in or by the New Testament Church, as seen in “supersessionism.” (Supersessionism is the traditional Christian belief that Christianity is the fulfillment of Biblical Judaism, and therefore that Jews who deny that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah fall short of their calling as God’s Chosen people. Supersessionism, in its more radical form, maintains that the Jews are no longer considered to be God’s Chosen people in any sense. This understanding is also generally termed “replacement theology.”)
G. Arguments Against Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism teaches that God starts over, from time to time, by declaring a covenant obsolete, or that it has been fulfilled, and creates a new one. Those who disagree usually say that dispensationalists have a point, but their emphasis is wrong. While God can declare a covenant void and create a new covenant, they say that dispensationalism does not properly define the covenants that God created and discarded.

1. Basic problem;

In dispensationalism, Protestants appear to be on the “horns of a dilemma.” They have a problem with the 4th commandment that will not go away, a position strongly held by Adventist groups. The 4th commandment states:

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy* (Ex.20:8-11).

If Protestants honored this commandment as they do the other nine, the behavior of millions of Christians would be vastly different each weekend. The argument is that Saturday is God’s holy day, the 7th day of the week. Sunday is the first day of the week by the Gregorian calendar, introduced in 1582, and the previous Roman calendar. The Lord’s Day (Mk.2:27-28), the day of worship, was changed from Saturday to Sunday by the Church of Rome. This change came about because of two factors: a) Saturday was the Sabbath of the Jews and early Christians in Rome did not want any association with those “repugnant” Jews, especially after Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70; b) the arrival of Mithraism. It was about 100 years before Christianity arrived in Rome that the ancient pagan religion of Mithraism arrived in Rome and it quickly gained a very large following. Later on, the Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180-192) even made Mithraism an imperial cult. Mithraism centers round the worship of the sun-god, Mithra, whose day of worship is Sunday, the day of the “Sun.” Priests of Mithraism were called “father” and they promoted a high moral code of conduct. In fact, the similarities between Mithraism and Christianity were so striking that Tertullian (A.D. 160-225), believed the devil had created a deliberate parallel of Christianity even before Christianity began.
Converts from Mithraism to Christianity brought the observance of Sunday with them into Rome's version of Christianity. Remember, early Christians in Rome wanted to distance themselves from the hated Jews, and since Sunday worship was commonly practiced in Rome, why not worship Jesus on Sunday? The first Sunday keepers in Rome did not use a command from Scripture to support this transition, but they did justify their actions. About A.D. 150 Justin Martyr wrote,

“But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.” (Justin Martyr, First Apology of Justin Martyr, Ante-Nicean Christian Library)

Christian groups differed in theology and practice because of distance, the lack of communication, regional “religious baggage” and anti-Semitism. Sunday observance was a unique feature that some have said began in Rome and spread to Alexandria. However, we see from Scripture that there is evidence of Sunday worship taking place before that:

a. Jesus was raised on the “...first day of the week” (Mt.28:1-6);

b. Pentecost’s outpouring of the Holy Spirit was on Sunday, where the disciples were meeting (Ac.2:1);

c. Paul wrote concerning the “regarding the day” (Ro.14:5-6, 10);

d. Paul called for tithes and offerings to be gathered on the “...first day of the week”, inferring that was their meeting day (1Co.16:2);

e. John was “...in the Spirit on the Lord's day” when he was visited by the Lord- notice that it does not say “Sabbath” (Re.1:10, emphasis added).

About the turn of the 4th century, Socrates, a church leader of that time observed:

“Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although almost all churches through the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Rome and Alexandria have ceased to do this. (Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, Book V, Chap. 22, Ante-Nicean Christian Library, Vol II)
These facts are presented because the Catholic Church does not historically defend the change from Sabbath to Sunday on the basis of Scripture, but on the basis of church authority. After Constantine came to power, the sacredness of Sunday for Christians was affirmed by law in A.D. 321. Eusebius, the trusted confidant and advisor to Constantine, defended that action saying:

“And all things whatsoever that it was the duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s Day, as more appropriately belong to it, because it has a precedence and is first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s Day.” (Eusebius’s Commentary on the Psalms 92, quoted in Coxe’s Sabbath literature, Vol I, p. 361)

These references are presented because Protestants essentially separated from Catholicism because of conflict between Bible truth and church authority. Protestants claim there is no authority on matters of faith and duty other than that which is found in Scripture. Catholics claim that authority is found in either the “inerrant declarations” of the Pope or decisions reached by scholars and church leaders. Protestants have taken Paul’s statement about “…regarding the day” and have chosen to worship on Sunday. But the fact is, every day is a day holy to the Lord. The problem comes in when we allow those who would apply the Law of Moses to the present day Covenant of Grace. It is true that Israel was told to worship on the 7th day of the week. God intended to show them as higher than all other nations and this is one way He did so;

*And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken* (De.26:19).

With the New Covenant, the Early Believers worshipped on Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead (Mt.28:1; Mk.16:1-4; Lk.24:1-3; Jn.20:1-2). It was on that same day, the first day of the week that Jesus appeared to His disciples the first time at evening (Jn.20:19). It was also the first day of the week that the Church was formed by the Holy Spirit’s arrival in the upper room when He “…sat upon each of them” as tongues of fire and “…filled with the Holy Ghost” every one of them (Ac.2:1-4).

So, dispensationalism is not the reason for worship on the first day of the week, nor is it a violation of the Commandments, contrary to some arguments. Some things were required of the Jews that were not required of the Gentiles.
H. Bilateral Covenants

A few years after declaring His unilateral covenant to Abraham, the Lord visited again with Abraham and told him that He was going to offer a special covenant to his descendants after 400 years passed. This covenant would be a bilateral covenant based upon mutual agreement (Ge.15). There is a sharp distinction between the unilateral covenant given to Abraham and the bilateral covenant that would be offered to Abraham’s descendants 400 years later. God intended to make Abraham’s biological descendants a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex.19:6). In other words, because of God’s great love for Abraham and his people, God wanted to exalt Abraham’s offspring as “His finest sons” on Earth. The descendants of Abraham would stand between God and the nations of Earth as priests, trustees of His grace.

God intended Abraham’s descendants to be men of faith like their father. He wanted them to love Him with all their hearts and their neighbors as themselves, just as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did. God wanted the Israelites to be a shining light to the Gentile nations in darkness. He wanted Israel to love the people of other nations and hate their sin. God wanted Israel to evangelize the world with a testimony about His love and gather a great harvest of souls for His coming Kingdom (Is.49:6; Ac.13:47). Israel was to be a nation of witnesses for the Lord, and missionaries to the whole world.

At the time of that second visit, Abraham still had no offspring. So, the Lord did something that was customary in ancient times. He made an oath to Abraham assuring him that He would offer a bilateral covenant to his descendants. That oath was ratified by God when He walked through the split animal parts that Abraham laid upon the ground (Ge.15; see also Je.34:19-20 on this practice). That event served as a witness to the oath that the Lord made to Abraham. In other words, Abraham killed the necessary animals for the oath and the Lord passed through the animal parts signifying that He would offer His covenant to descendants of Abraham who were not yet present on Earth. Although Abraham knew he would not live long enough to see God’s plans fulfilled, Abraham was satisfied that God would keep vigil and honor His oath (Ex.12:42). By requiring blood at the declaration of the oath, God signified to Abraham that He, the Great I AM and eternal member of the Godhead of the Universe, would keep His covenant with Abraham’s offspring upon pain of death.

Although God gave Abraham an oath that He would offer a bilateral covenant with his offspring, the covenant with the heirs was not ratified or mutually agreed upon for more than 400 years (Ex.12:41; He.9:18-21). In fact, the bilateral covenant was not ratified until after God gave all of the details to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex.24:1-8). Unlike the unilateral covenant, both parties were required to agree and both parties were to be faithful to the terms and conditions set forth in it, a bilateral covenant. So, when the time came to fulfill the oath that God had promised to Abraham, God directed Moses to come up the mountain and meet with Him. Moses was required
to write down all the terms and conditions of that bilateral covenant. That covenant would be both perpetual, until Messiah appeared on Earth, and temporary, until Messiah should die for mankind. That covenant bound God and the seed of Abraham together for more than 1,400 years. When Moses had completed the task of documenting the covenant, he went down the mountain and read the words of that covenant, the Law, to all of the people (Ex.24:1-8).

The bilateral covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham was ratified with the sprinkling of blood. After hearing the terms and conditions of the covenant, the people voiced their agreement twice. Since third party witnesses were not present, Moses stacked twelve huge stones, one for each tribe in a pile, as a witness to this event, signifying Israel's corporate agreement. The shedding of blood put this covenant into effect (He.9:18-22). The significance of the blood is very important. A blood covenant in ancient times was a life or death issue for both parties. For God, the only way out of this covenant would be through His own death. Of course, since God cannot “die”, He will keep His covenant promises. For Israel, the only way out was their destruction (Le.26; De.28). If one party proved to be unfaithful, then the faithful partner had the right to demand the blood or death of the unfaithful party.

I. “Sunset” Clause

The bilateral Mosaic Covenant between God and Abraham’s offspring was temporary from its inception, with a clear sunset clause in it (Mt.26:28; Co.2:17; He.9:15-10:4). God offered a covenant to the descendants of Abraham because He needed a special job done. Basically, He needed a group of informed people to reveal what He was all about to an uninformed world (Ac.13:47; 26:22-23). As with any covenant, the special covenant that the Lord offered Israel contained a number of laws. The Mosaic Covenant included laws regarding food, both clean and unclean, tithing, animal sacrifices, purification ceremonies, the observance of annual feast days, new moon celebrations, observance of sabbatical years, circumcision, the priesthood of Aaron, and many civil laws. All of those laws served as illustrations of Jesus as King and High Priest, His coming Kingdom and shadows of His ministry, death and resurrection. When the Light of the World came to Earth, the shadows expired (Co.2; Ga.3) and all believers in Christ stand before God as one flesh.

J. Israel’s Prophetic Destiny

Some dispensationalists disagree with Israel’s prophetic destiny. Christians widely believe that God’s covenant promises given to ancient Israel must last until fulfilled. This doctrine is affirmed by many popular end-time scenarios promoted by Christians. But, all of the terms and conditions put forth in the Mosaic Covenant were conditional. A bilateral covenant is based on good faith and the performance of the parties involved. When Israel violated the conditions of that Covenant, God
put them on hold, turning to the Gentiles, until the current dispensation of Grace is fulfilled. Then He will turn again to Israel and deal with her.

K. Two Covenants Fulfilled

The blood Jesus shed at Calvary fulfilled the unilateral Covenant given to Adam and Eve, as well as the bilateral covenant between God and the nation of Israel. A fulfilled covenant is a finished covenant. The animal offerings required under the blood covenant pointed forward to Jesus' death. When He died, the Old Covenant ended because Jesus' blood had been shed; the shadow was replaced with reality (Co.2:17). God designed the Old Covenant (Mosaic) from the beginning to be a “tutor” or schoolmaster to explain the wonderful dimensions of the Plan of Salvation. If Israel had properly understood the object lessons of salvation, it would have had an endless supply of wonderful themes to share with the whole world. (Ga.3:24-26).

Incidentally, the Mosaic Covenant was not designed as something that belonged exclusively to Israel. While they were the trustees of salvation and the first in line to benefit from it, God promised to bless all nations through Abraham by allowing Gentiles to partake of the wonderful provisions of that Covenant (Is.2, 56). This is why God called Abraham the "...father of many nations" (Ge.17:4).

L. New Covenant

Because the bilateral covenant with Adam and Eve and the Mosaic Covenant were coming to an end, Jesus initiated the New Covenant just before His death. Luke writes, “In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’ ” (Lk.22:20). When Jesus said to His disciples, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you,” He was initiating a New (bilateral) Covenant, a better Covenant than what had been offered to Israel at Mt. Sinai (2Co.3:6; He.7:22; 9:15).

A new Blood Covenant became necessary as fulfillment of the Plan of God, which was indicated by the sacrifice of millions of animals under the Law. God’s plan had always been to offer salvation to all men (Lk.21:24). “Whosoever will…” had been God’s plan from the start (Jn.3:16; Re.22:17). This bilateral New Covenant was offered to everyone who would believe He was/is the Messiah. There are two essential differences between the New Covenant, based on Christ’s blood and the Old Covenant, based on animal blood: 1) the Old Covenant required the use of teaching aides (sacrificial lambs, ceremonies, etc.) while the New Covenant is based on the life and actions of Christ; 2) God gave the Old Covenant to the biological offspring of Abraham whereas He extends the New Covenant to anyone in any nation or race who puts their faith in Jesus. In both Covenants, the means to salvation is the same, namely, obedient submission to the will of God; an experience known as living by faith, subsequent to repentance.
God entered into the Old Covenant with a nation of people who were carnal and rebellious from the start. God enters into the New Covenant with people of all nations who are willing to be born again. Israel was initially awed into submission at the display of His glory and power at Mt. Sinai (Ex.19; Ga.4:24-25), but their hearts remained unconverted.

Bible history faithfully records their failures beginning with the golden calf at the base of Mt. Sinai. In every case, Israel’s hard heart led to failure (Ezk.2-3). The Israel that entered into the Mosaic Covenant at Mt. Sinai was the Israel that died in the desert because of rebellion (He.3:16).

M. Two-Covenant Theology

Because there are many prominent ministers today on television, we see things they say which are taken out of context or outright misquoted and thus misleading to the general Church. For instance, on Wednesday, March 1, 2006, The Jerusalem Post reported that Dr. Jerry Falwell had accepted a so-called “two covenant” or “dual covenant” theology, believing that Jews and Gentiles are covered by two different covenants, and that the Jewish people therefore do not need to come to faith in Christ. Dr. Falwell (1933-2007), was founder of Liberty University and Thomas Road Baptist Church, and the “Old Time Gospel Hour” nationally syndicated radio and television ministry.

In essence, the two covenant theology was a response, as thought by some, largely on the part of liberal and neo-orthodox theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, to the crisis of the Jewish people before and after the Holocaust. Some theologians and Christian leaders accept the idea that the Jewish people had a prior covenant with God, a covenant without Christ that was sufficient for their salvation. Of course, that would be a denial of the Covenant of Redemption, and an insult to the cross of Christ.

The Jerusalem Post article claimed that Dr. Falwell has accepted that theological concept at the urging of Pastor Dr. John Hagee and others. Pastor Hagee (1940- ), is the founder and senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, a non-denominational charismatic mega-church. He also is the chief executive officer (CEO) of his non-profit corporation, Global Evangelism Television (GETV). Pastor Hagee is the founder and National Chairman of the Christian-Zionist organization, Christians United for Israel, incorporated on February 7, 2006.

According to the article in The Post, Dr. Hagee and an Orthodox rabbi, both from Texas, had apparently persuaded Dr. Jerry Falwell that Jews could get to heaven without being converted to Christianity. According to the article, televangelist John Hagee and Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, whose Cornerstone Church and Rodfei Sholom congregations are based in San Antonio, told The Jerusalem Post that Falwell had adopted Hagee’s innovative belief in what Christians refer to as “dual covenant” theology.
This creed, which runs counter to mainstream evangelicalism, maintains that the Jewish people have a special relationship to God through the revelation at Sinai and therefore do not need “to go through Christ or the Cross” to get to heaven. Scheinberg said this has been Hagee’s position for 25 years, during which the two have worked together on behalf of Israel and that Falwell had also come to accept it. Falwell sent a representative to the San Antonio launch of Christians United for Israel in early February, as did popular televangelist Pat Robertson. This report was repudiated by Dr. John Hagee, who said he never made those statements to The Jerusalem Post or to anyone else. Apparently Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, in his statements to The Post, was either misquoted or did not understand what had been said. Dr. John Hagee also indicated that he does not accept “dual covenant” theology.

We want to affirm that we are for Israel and her title to the homeland God promised her. Likely no nation of believers has invested more in defense of Israel than this generation of believers in America. But, to say that there is another way to heaven besides Jesus is to say that the Bible is not true.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Jn.14:6).

N. Other Teaching on Covensants

Some teach that there are three covenants: 1) the Covenant of Works (or Law); 2) the Covenant of Redemption; 3) the Covenant of Grace.

1. Covenant of Works;

Under the Covenant of Works, mankind, represented ultimately in a covenantal sense under Adam beginning from the Garden of Eden, failed to live as God intended and stood condemned.

2. Covenant of Redemption;

But beyond time the Covenant of Redemption was made between the Father and Son, to agree that Christ would live an acceptable substitutionary life on behalf of, and as a covenantal representative for, those who would sin but would trust in Christ as their substitutionary atonement, which bought them into the Covenant of Grace.

3. Covenant of Grace;

The Covenant of Grace applies to all who trust Christ for their salvation, regardless of ethnicity, and thus the Covenant covers Jews and Gentiles alike with regard to salvation, sanctification, and resurrection. The Covenant
of Grace forms the basis of the later covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the New Covenant in Christ.

Held by many evangelical Reformed Protestant Churches who take a historical-grammatical and typological interpretation of the Bible, the adherents to this belief would include the Reformed Church, most of the Presbyterian Churches, some low church Anglicans, some Baptist churches, some Wesleyan/Methodist churches and certain Lutheran churches.

There is also a belief that is similar to the covenantal system, but which emphasizes the Kingdom of God rather than the three covenants. It is exemplified in works such as Graeme Goldsworthy's *Gospel and Kingdom*. The Old Testament is interpreted using typology and the grammatico-historical method. Revelation is read according to the conventions of the apocalyptic genre.

1. **Kingdom teaching;**

   God's purpose for all time was to redeem for Himself a people through the death and resurrection of Christ. The incarnation of Christ is the focal point of the Bible and all history. The Old Testament is understood to contain a number of covenants and types which are fulfilled in the past and future work of Jesus.

   Goldsworthy schematizes the Kingdom of God as the expression of God's rule over God's people in God's place. In the beginning, God Himself ruled over Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After the fall, the rule of God was expressed through the Law, the Judges, the King of Israel and finally the promise that God would write His law on His people's hearts (Je.31:33).

   "God's place" came to be the Tabernacle in the wilderness, later the Temple in Jerusalem, and finally the promise of the indwelling Spirit of God (Joel 2, Ezk.37). His "people" were Abraham, the people of Israel, then the faithful remnant of Israel, and finally the promised Messiah and those who would trust Him (Ps.2).

2. **Rule in the New Testament;**

   In the New Testament, God's rule is exercised through Jesus Christ the King, over His people the Church, of which Israel was a type. Salvation for all people in all times is found by trusting, either explicitly or implicitly, in Jesus. Thus, Abraham, Moses, David, and all Christians today are saved by the same faith. The Jews are regarded as special in God's plan, as in Romans and Ephesians, and yet the Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel find their fulfillment in Jesus and the Church rather than in a literal restoration of Israel.
Adherents to this belief are usually idealist and a-millennial. They say that Revelation describes what is happening throughout the Christian era, from Pentecost to the Second Coming. This view acknowledges that there may be valid preteristic connections (e.g. the seven hills = Rome), but the full understanding comes through an idealistic-historicism, but without necessarily seeing the Roman Catholic Church as the antichrist. The events of the Book, while not to be tied to particular historical events, still describe the sort of things that will happen until Christ returns. The Book of Revelation is interpreted according to apocalyptic conventions regarding numbers and colors (7 = perfection/completion; white = victory) and the enormous number of allusions to the rest of Scripture.

Interpretation is as the literal, “plain meaning” implies (i.e. rejection of typological and allegorical methods, although not rejecting types or allegories as being present in the Scriptures per se). Biblical references to Israel tend to mean ancient and modern Israel in their theology.

III. SUBMISSION TO GOD’S WILL

In the bilateral covenant, submission to the covenant brings the promises of that covenant to the one who submits. That is, we live by faith that God will carry out His part of the covenant and take care of us. But man has a problem in that his will is naturally selfish and he wants to do what he wants to do. We love to have our own way. It is not easy to submit to the will of another, unless there is some strong motivation that impels us to submission. The carrying out of our will in a selfish way only leads to more selfishness and to a stronger inclination to have our own way.

It is this selfish inclination in our will that makes it necessary for God to require submission if we want to receive the benefits of the New Covenant. His will is never selfish, but always one of benevolence. The cheerful doing of it always leads to an increase of benevolence toward us. Therefore, when God requires us to submit our will to Him, He is requiring of us that which is best for us. The more consideration for others and true benevolence is developed within us, the more our natures are purified and exalted and the more we are able to fulfill the purpose of our creation.

Submitting to God is often the hardest of all tasks, except we choose to die to ourselves. Submitting is most necessary if we are to be exalted to total fellowship with God and enjoy the highest development of our faculties and powers. The exercise of our will tends to dwarf and blight the finest things in our character. The adoption of a submissive attitude toward God and His will paves the way for the natural development of those qualities within us which are most worth developing, and which enables us God-ward; the more like Him we become, the happier we are.

Unselfish devotion to benevolent service toward God and toward our fellow man enriches the heart and life as nothing else can do, and leads the way to happiness, peace, and contentment, which make one truly blessed. Submission to God is a necessity in order to
enjoy the Christian life. The more fully we are submitted to His will, the more cheerfully we can carry it out, and the sweeter and richer will be the joy of doing it.

For the pastor who would function as a theologian, it is vital to understand obedience and to present it as the requirement to receiving from God. Reluctant obedience is often the way a believer wants to function, and that is never real obedience. Besides, it leaves the person in a position of disgruntled service to what they do not will. It is only when the heart responds to God willingly and cheerfully that the power of such service to make one happy is realized. We must conquer our reluctant wills. Following is a statement that rings so true;

"The essence of sacrifice of self is the sacrifice of the will. Unwilling offerings are a contradiction, and in fact, there is no such thing. The quality of unwillingness destroys the character of the offering and robs it of all sacredness. Reluctant Christianity is not Christianity."

True nobility of both the inner and the outer life comes from submission to, and cooperation with, God. The nature of our relations with God depends upon the extent of our submission to Him. This is well illustrated in the relationship of husband and wife, which Paul teaches are a picture of Christ and the Church (Ep.5:23-27). When two marry, and there is no merging of the wills and purposes, with each retaining their individuality, standing apart from the other in wish and desire, in choosing and willing, their union can never be a happy one. They must yield themselves to each other. There must be a merging of the wills into each other, a combining of their purposes, a consideration of each other and a sacrificing of the individual will.

The husband and wife who really love each other can enjoy each other's presence and draw near to each other in spirit and affection. This makes their union a blessed reality and a source of more true joy than any other natural relation. Those who thus enjoy each other are the ones who have sacrificed self and lost sight of selfish considerations; each desiring to please the other and each finds their happiness in the happiness of the other.

In the Scripture, Christ is represented as being the Husband of the Church, and the Church is taught to submit to Him as a wife should submit to her husband. The wife submits to her husband because she loves him; if she submits for any other reason she must be unhappy in her submission.

The submission that comes from love, and is the willing response of love, is the source of the deepest and truest happiness that can come from human sources. So, submission to God, which is acceptable to Him, and which reacts in blessedness to the soul who submits, must be based upon love. The secret of such submission is thus stated by John, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1Jn.4:16). So he exclaims in the next breath, "God is love." Only the truly submitted heart can fathom the love of God, or can love God with that self-enriching love, which inspires devotion and causes us to delight in God.
The fervor of love softens the will and makes it flexible. When we love, it is easy to obey; it is easy to submit. All the irksomeness and compulsion is taken out of serving the Lord when the heart is full of love toward God. The more we love, the easier it is to serve, and the more joyful is that service.

Self-surrender is the heart of all true faith in Christ. Paul told that secret when he said of a certain church, that they “…first gave their own selves.” Then they could endure persecutions. They could bear with patience the things which came upon them and still be full of joy. The yoke of God was not galling to them. The sufferings that came upon them were not hard to be borne. They were overrunning with love. Their hearts were knit together with bonds stronger than death. They could be exceedingly joyful in all their tribulations, because they had first given themselves.

There is barrenness and unhappiness in the lives of many persons because they are trying to give service, when they have not given themselves. They are trying to serve God, but at the same time they are serving themselves. They try to combine those two services and what an unsatisfying, irksome service they find it to be. How often their will is contrary to God’s will and how often their will breaks out to claim its own way.

This conflict of two wills shuts out from their lives the blessed sense of God’s nearness and approval, which is granted to those who have: 1) first given themselves; 2) yielded their all without reservation to God; 3) surrendered themselves, and their wills, and now find a continuous inspiration to service in the delight of their own hearts in serving.

A belief in God which is not based on self-surrender is a mere form. It is of no more value than the “faith” of a pagan, for it is the same kind of belief that he has. True faith is based on love; love flowing out in devotion, service and self-surrender. The forms of religion are nothing without the real inner substance. If we have the form, without the inner content, we are poor indeed; but if we are thoroughly submitted to God, we have the inner content of the faith, no matter in what form it manifests itself.

The attitude of our will toward God is thus beautifully expressed by one writer who said, “A man’s will should be an echo, not a voice; the echo of God, not the voice of self. It should be silent as some sweet instrument is silent till the owner’s hand touches the keys.”

It is self-surrender that tunes all the strings of our hearts to unison of purpose, and makes them responsive to the touch of the divine Musician. When we are attuned to God’s will through self-surrender, our hearts will be filled with His melodies; there will be celestial harmonies in our lives; our hearts will join with the angels in their chorus of praise, and we shall be raised up together with Christ and made to “…sit together in heavenly places” with Him (Ep.2:6).

Self-surrender is the key that unlocks all the riches of our own natures, and causes them to bud and blossom and produce rich fragrance. Every noble thing in the believer is made nobler, by submission; every beauty is rendered more beautiful, a thousand new beauties and riches are brought into the life that were not there before. Self-surrender empties our
hearts and makes them ready to receive divine treasures. Love, joy, faith, peace, 
contentment, and all the blessed fruition of righteousness have their roots sunk deep in 
self-surrender. Living life this way is of great benefit to the pastor, for people who trust and 
submit in ways described are rarely difficult to pastor; rather, they seek the “...sincere milk 
of the word” as their necessary bread and find it easy to forgive others.

Many people seem to think that surrender to God impoverishes men, and that it is a wholly 
one-sided thing, but God asks that we be emptied of self only that He may fill us and that 
He may give Himself to us in the fullest measure of our capacity and willingness to receive 
Him. If we hold to anything of self, or of the world, it is because we are not willing to be 
filled with God and do not believe that He will be to us more than all else beside. All lack of 
submission shuts out God from that part of our nature, which is not submitted, and 
prevents Him from having control of that part of the will, which remains un-submitted.

We should open the door of our hearts wide, unlocking every chamber and handing the 
keys to God. We should entreat Him to come in and fill us to our fullest capacity. We 
should empty our heart of self, and all selfish plans, purposes, desires, reluctance of the 
will and every hesitation to obey. That means we should give Him our all. We should not 
let one thing be held back. When all is His, the floods of His grace will flow into our soul till 
we wonder why we ever hesitated to yield all to Him.

The pastor who would be a theologian for his flock must learn and communicate that God 
yields His all to us, even as we are to yield our all to Him. God withholds no good thing 
when we are yielded to Him fully. So the yielding is mutual, although He gives more than 
we, because He is greater than we. He asks the surrender of our will only that He may 
guide us into paths wherein we never could walk without His guidance. Cheerful self-
surrender has a wonderful power to banish the gloom and the clouds of human life. The 
un-surrendered life is like the mountain whose top is ever veiled in clouds.

It has been said, “Peace is to will as God wills.” We all desire peace, but this is the secret 
of peace. When we have said, “Not my will be done,” the conflict of our will versus His has 
ceased. Then we can will as God wills, and His peace which “…passes all understanding” 
will fill our hearts; and then in the quiet, joyous times, His presence will fall upon our souls, 
refreshing and blessing them, and calm content will overspread our life like the quiet of the 
evening twilight.
Part IV
Eschatology

I. END TIME STUDIES

Christian eschatology is a major branch of study within Christian theology. For the pastor who would be a theologian, eschatology is a necessary area of study. Eschatology comes from two Greek words meaning “last” and “study.” It is the study of the end of things, whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, or the end of the world. Broadly speaking, Christian eschatology is the study of the destiny of mankind as it is revealed in the Bible, which is the primary source for all Christian eschatology studies.

The major issues and events in Christian eschatology are: 1) death and the afterlife; 2) Heaven and Hell; 3) the Second Coming of Jesus; 4) the Resurrection of the Dead; 5) the Rapture; 6) the Tribulation; 7) Millennialism; 8) the end of the world; 9) the Last Judgment; 10) the New Heaven and New Earth of the world to come. Eschatological passages are found in many places in the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testaments. There are also many extra biblical examples of eschatological prophecy, as well as church traditions.

Eschatology is an ancient branch of study in Christian theology, presumably starting with the Olivet discourse, including the “sheep” and the “goat nations,” and other discourses of end times by Jesus. Included too is the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, first touched on by Paul of Tarsus and Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD), then given more consideration by the Christian apologist, Justin Martyr. Treatment of eschatology continued in the West in the teachings of Tertullian and was given fuller reflection and speculation soon after by Origen. It was increasingly recognized as a formal division of theological study during the 20th century.

The following approaches arose from the study of Christianity's most central eschatological document, the Book of Revelation, but the principles embodied in them can be applied to all prophecy in the Bible, and especially the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel. They are by no means mutually exclusive and are often combined to form a more complete and coherent interpretation of prophetic passages.

A. Eschatological Approaches

Most interpretations fit into one, or a combination of, several approaches.

1. Preterism;

Preterism, from the Latin praeteritus, meaning “gone by,” is an approach which sees prophecy as chiefly being fulfilled in the past, especially, in the case of the Book of Revelation, during the 1st century. Prophecies in general, according to that view, have already been fulfilled. Revelation, for example, may be seen as referring to the major players and events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 AD, or the struggle of Christianity to
survive the persecutions of the Roman Empire, as many other interpretations are considered. There are two major views within preterism, partial preterism and full preterism. The problem for preterism is that prophecies may have multiple fulfillments.

2. Historicism;

Historicism says that Biblical prophecies provide us with a broad view of history, as well as an explanation of the religious significance of historical events. Historicists attempt to identify prophetic passages with major events in history.

3. Futurism;

In Futurism, parallels may be drawn with historical events, but most eschatological prophecies are chiefly referring to events which have not been fulfilled, but will take place at the end of the age and the end of the world. According to this approach, most prophecies will be fulfilled during a global time of chaos known as the Great Tribulation and afterwards.

a. Dispensational futurism vs. historic or covenantal futurism;

Some of those who say Dispensational futurism is proper, believe or say the Bible may or may not be factually accurate, but is designed to teach spiritual lessons through allegory and myth. They say the Bible is more literary than historical. Typically, this stance is taken by churches and individuals who do not place significant emphasis upon eschatology at all.

This belief is held by Christian groups ranging from those who hold to Bible inerrancy to liberal scholars who mostly belong to mainline Protestant denominations. Supporters of this position also include high church Anglo-Catholic, Catholic-leaning Lutherans, Eastern Orthodox churches, and traditional Roman Catholic groups. Belief in the allegorical interpretation of the Bible does not exclude belief in praxeological (the study of human conduct) or literal hermeneutics. For example, Roman Catholic hermeneutics holds that there are many senses in which the Bible is true in addition to literal truth.

The Catholic Apostolic Church believed that the Bible should be interpreted allegorically. Some descendants of the Catholic Apostolic Church also known as Irvingism, such as Apostelamt Jesu Christi, Apostelamt Juda, Restored Apostolic Mission Church and the Old Apostolic Church also believe in the allegorical interpretation of the Bible.
b. Historicism (covenantal futurism);

Expositors of the traditional Protestant interpretation of Revelation, known as Historicism, have often maintained that Revelation was written in AD 96 and not AD 70. Edward Bishop Elliott, in the *Horae Apocalypticae* (1862), argued that John wrote the Book in exile on Patmos “at the close of the reign of Domitian; that is near the end of the year 95 or beginning of 96”. He notes that Domitian was assassinated in September 96. Elliot began his lengthy review of historical evidence by quoting Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenaeus mentioned that the Apocalypse was seen “no very long time ago [but] almost in our own age, toward the end of the reign of Domitian.”

Other historicists have seen no significance in the date that Revelation was written, and have even held to an early date, while Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., makes an exegetical and historical argument for the pre-AD 70 composition of Revelation.

4. Idealism;

In idealism, also known as “spiritual” or “symbolic” eschatology, the events described in prophecy are neither past, present, nor future but are representative of larger ideals and principles. Eschatological prophecy deals with the ongoing struggle between the forces of light and darkness, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Its message is purely a spiritual one, an allegory of the spiritual path, which is equally relevant in all ages and for all people.

B. Afterlife

There were different schools of thought on the afterlife in Israel during the 1st century, AD. The Sadducees, who recognized only the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, as authoritative, did not believe in an afterlife or a resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees, who not only accepted the Torah, but the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures also, believed in the resurrection of the dead. This is known to have been a major point of contention between the two groups (Ac.8). The Pharisees based their belief on passages such as Daniel 12:2, which says: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Some traditions, notably the Seventh Day Adventists, teach that the soul sleeps after death, and will not awake again until the resurrection, while others believe the spirit goes to an intermediate place where we will live consciously until the resurrection. For clarity it should be stated that the SDA understanding of “soul” is
not that of Calvin. By “soul,” SDA theologians mean the physical person (monism), and that no component of human nature survives death; therefore each human will be “recreated” at resurrection.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, on the afterlife says:

“Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven - through a purification or immediately - or immediate and everlasting damnation.

Most denominations, with a notable exception being the Seventh Day Adventists, would affirm the statement from the Catechism of the Catholic Church above, with the exception of the parenthetical phrase, “through a purification or immediately.” This alludes to the Catholic belief in a spiritual state, known as “purgatory,” in which those souls who are not condemned to Hell, but are also not completely pure as required for entry into Heaven, go through a final process of purification before their full acceptance into Heaven.

Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism do not believe in purgatory as such, though the Orthodox Church is willing to allow for a period of continued sanctification, the process of being made pure or holy, after death. Most Protestants reject the doctrine of purgatory on the basis that, according to the Protestant interpretation of Scripture, Christ has already made full atonement for our sins on the cross, thereby removing all obstacles which prevent us from coming directly into the presence of God after death.

C. Resurrection

The word resurrection comes from the Latin resurrectus, which is the past participle of resurge, meaning to “rise again.” Although the doctrine of the resurrection comes to the forefront in the New Testament, it predates the Christian era. There is an apparent reference to the resurrection in the Book of Job, where Job says, “I know that my redeemer lives, and that he will stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though... worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:25-27). Again, the prophet Daniel writes, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Da.12:2). Isaiah says, “Your dead will live. Together with my dead body, they will arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust, for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth will cast out the dead” (Is.26:19).

This belief was still common among the Jews in New Testament times, as exemplified by the passage which relates to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus told Lazarus’ sister, Martha, that Lazarus would rise again, she replied, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (Jn.11:24).
Also, one of the two main branches of the Jewish religious establishment, the Pharisees, believed in and taught the future resurrection of the body (Ac.23:1-8).

An important development in the New Testament is the understanding that the resurrection of the wicked will not be at the same time as that of the righteous. Revelation says: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him a thousand years” (Re.20:6). The rest of the dead “...did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Re.20:5). Jesus’ Words concur with those of Revelation: “The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come forth: those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn.5:28-29).

The Gospel writers wrote that our resurrection bodies will be different from those we have now. Jesus said, “In the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven” (Mt.22:30). Paul added that in the resurrection of the dead, we can see that the “…body… is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1Co.15:42-44). According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church the body after resurrection is changed into a spiritual, imperishable body.

Christ was raised with His own body. He proved that when He said to the disciples, “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself”. Yet, He did not return to an earthly life. So, in Him, “…all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear,” but Christ “…will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body,” a “spiritual body.”

Although Martin Luther personally believed and taught resurrection of the dead in combination with soul sleep, this is not a mainstream teaching of Lutheranism and most Lutherans traditionally believe in resurrection of the body in combination with the immortal soul.

An early 20th century American preacher, Billy Sunday, epitomized the evangelical focus on going to heaven in his sermon, “Heaven: A Wonderful Place; Where There is No More Death; Blessed Hope of the Christian.” In the message Sunday characteristically explained the feelings of his audience by saying,

“Everybody wants to go to Heaven. We are all curious. We want to know, where Heaven is, how it looks, who are there, what they wear, and how to get there!”

Sunday spoke of many aspects of the afterlife such as the nice weather and eternal health, although there is no mention of the resurrection of the dead. He ended with an illustration about a man who died and went to heaven exclaiming “Home, home at last,” as if he had arrived at the end of his eschatological journey.
Several churches, such as the Anabaptists and Socinians of the Reformation, then Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Christadelphians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and theologians of other different traditions reject the idea of the immortality of a non-physical soul as a vestige of Neoplatonism, and other pagan traditions. In that school of thought, the dead remain dead and do not immediately progress to a Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory, until a physical resurrection of some or all of the dead occurs at the end of time. Some groups, Christadelphians in particular, consider that it is not a universal resurrection and that at this time of resurrection, the Last Judgment will take place.

D. Rapture (Catching Away)

In his letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul wrote, “...the Lord himself will descend from heaven... and the dead in Christ will rise first.” Then he added that “...we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1Th.4:16-17). The rising of those who are still alive to join the resurrected dead is known as the rapture or catching away. This passage implies that Paul believed that the return of Jesus, the Resurrection, and the Rapture would happen simultaneously.

Rapture is used in at least two senses: 1) in the sense of pre-tribulation views in which a group of people will be “left behind”; 2) as a synonym for the Resurrection generally.

E. Great Tribulation

There are many passages in the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, which speak of a time of terrible tribulation such as has never been known, a time of natural and man-made disasters on an awesome scale. Jesus said that at the time of His coming, “There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever will be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened” (Mt.24:21-22).

Furthermore, the Messiah's return and the tribulation that accompanies it will come at a time when people are not expecting it. Jesus said that neither He nor the angels, but His Father only knew the time. His statement on this included the idea that people would be carrying on normal life when it happens, just as in the days of Noah (Mt.24:36-39). Paul echoed this theme, saying, “For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them” (1Th.5:3).

The “…abomination of desolation” or “desolating sacrilege” is a term found in the Book of Daniel. The term is used by Jesus Christ in the Olivet discourse, according to both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark. In the Matthew account, Jesus is presented as quoting Daniel explicitly.
So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (Mt.24:15, ESV).

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains (Mk.13:14, ESV).

This verse in the Olivet Discourse also occurs in the Gospel of Luke.

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains… (Lk.21:20-21, ESV).

Many Bible scholars conclude that Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 are prophecies after the event about the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Roman general Titus. Preterist Christian commentators believe that Jesus quoted this prophecy in Mark 13:14 as referring to an event in His 1st century disciple’s immediate future, the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Futurist Christians consider the “…abomination of desolation” prophecy of Daniel mentioned by Jesus as referring to an event in the end time future, when a seven-year peace treaty will be signed between Israel and a world ruler called “…the man of lawlessness”, or the antichrist, affirmed by the writings of the Apostle Paul in Second Thessalonians.

Other scholars conclude that the abomination of desolation refers to the Crucifixion, an attempt by the emperor Hadrian to erect a statue to Jupiter in the Jewish Temple, or an attempt by Caligula to have a statue depicting him as Zeus built in the Temple.

F. The Seventy Weeks Prophecy

Many interpreters calculate the length of the tribulation at seven years. The key to this understanding is the “…seventy weeks” prophecy in the Book of Daniel. The prophecy of seventy septets, literally "seventy times seven", appears in the angel Gabriel’s reply to Daniel (Da.9:22-27), a work included in the Jewish Tanakh, the Christian Bible, as well as the Septuagint. The prophecy is part of both the Jewish account of history and Christian eschatology.

The prophet had a vision of the angel Gabriel, who told him, “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city” (i.e., Israel and Jerusalem-Da.9:24). After making a comparison with events in the history of Israel, many scholars have concluded that each day in the seventy weeks represents a year. The first sixty-nine weeks are interpreted as covering the period until Christ’s first
coming, but the last week is thought to represent the years of the tribulation which will come at the end of this age, directly preceding the Millennial Age of peace. This would also indicate a period of time when the Gentiles should come in, also known as the Church Age, shown as an interim period before God turns again to Israel and deals with them.

The people of the “...prince who is to come” will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it will be with a flood, and till the end of the war, desolations are determined. Then he will confirm a “...covenant with many for one week”. But in the middle of the week, he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And then this abomination will be brought about by one who makes desolate, “...even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Da.9:26-27).

This is an obscure prophecy, but in combination with other passages, it has been interpreted to mean that the “...prince who is to come” will make a seven-year covenant with Israel that will allow the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstitution of sacrifices, but “...in the middle of the week,” he will break the agreement and set up an idol of himself in the Temple and force people to worship it— the “...abomination of desolation.” Paul speaks of this;

Let no-one deceive you by any means, for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2Th.2:3-4).

G. The Second Coming

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven (Ac.1:9-11).

Many, but not all Christians, believe that the coming of Christ will be instantaneous and worldwide. “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Mt.24:27). Also, many believe that the coming of Christ will be visible to all; “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (v.30). Also, the coming of Christ is expected to be audible; “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mt.24:31).
This is where some deviate, believing that the resurrection of the righteous will occur as an inclusive event with His “second coming”; “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1Th.4:16).

In one single event, the saved that are alive at Christ's coming will be caught up together with the resurrected dead believers to meet the Lord in the air and “…then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1Th.4:17). But some see the events of Matthew 24 separately from His Second Coming, when He sets up His Kingdom on earth.

Either way, false christ(s) will appear and false prophets will be active in the land (Mt.24:21, 24). Those false christ(s) will perform great signs and are no ordinary people; “For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Re.16:14). Satan's angels will also appear as godly clergymen, and Satan will appear as an angel of light. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2Co.11:13-15). As his crowning claim, Satan will claim to be Jesus the Christ (Mt.24:23-24).

In this great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The Church has long professed to look to the Savior’s advent as the consummation of Her hopes. The great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come and in different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John (Re.1:13-15). We should remember this, that Satan cannot be in multiple places at the same time, while Christ can and is. So the difference will be manifest to the believer.

After Jesus meets His followers in the air, the Marriage of the Lamb takes place with His Bride who has “…made herself ready.” The bride is “…granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Re.19:7-8). Christ is represented throughout Revelation as the Lamb, symbolizing the giving of His life as an atoning sacrifice for the people of the world, just as lambs were sacrificed on the altar, representative of Christ’s actions for the sins of Israel and the whole world. His Bride appears to represent the people of God, for She, the True Church, is dressed in the “…righteous acts of the saints.” As the marriage takes place, there is a great celebration in heaven which involves a “…great multitude” (Re.19:6).

The Book of Revelation states: “I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and with righteousness he
judges and makes war” (Re.19:11). We will see Christ then, not as a Lamb, but as a Warrior, making war against the forces of evil. There is a passage in Zechariah which is identified with this event; “I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, the houses looted, and the women raped… Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations… Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with you” (Zec.14:2-5).

The army of heaven is described in similar terms as the resurrected and raptured believers (Re.19:14). Scripture says that the “...beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies...” will gather to make war against Christ and His army (Re.19:19). Isaiah also speaks of such a battle, in which the Lord shows up with fire, His chariots, likened to a whirlwind, to “...render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword the Lord will judge all flesh, and the slain of the Lord will be many” (Is.66:15-16).

In the end, according to Revelation, the Lamb and His armies are victorious and the beast, generally identified as the antichrist, is captured and thrown into the lake of fire, while his battle casualties are left as food for the birds. Satan, the spiritual driving force behind the beast and his armies, is imprisoned by the angel who binds him and casts him into the bottomless pit for a thousand years to keep him from deceiving man (Re.20:1-3).

H. Millennial Reign

While only Revelation speaks of a period of a thousand years for Christ’s rule on Earth, there are numerous other prophecies in both Testaments concerning a future age of peace. Isaiah speaks of such a time and describes it in Edenic terms when there will be no meat-eaters, but peace in the animal kingdom, with all the animals eating grass again as they were originally designed. No hurt will occur, for “...the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is.11:5-9).

Just as the physical bodies of people are changed into spiritual bodies in the resurrection, noted previously, so Isaiah implies that animals will undergo a transformation which enables them to live in peace with human beings and with each other. There will be no more killing, either in the human or the animal kingdoms. God reverses the Covenant made with Noah in which He said, “The fear and the dread of you will be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that moves on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea” (Ge.9:2). If the passage in Isaiah is interpreted literally, a return to the vegetarian diet of Eden seems to be a natural conclusion (Ge.1:29-30).

Micah expresses similarly lofty thoughts, adding that Jerusalem will be the Lord’s capital in those days. From Jerusalem the “…word of the Lord…” will go forth and He will “…judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off.” The entire military apparatus will be changed with all effort going into agricultural
activity. Nations will not go to war anymore and fear of aggressor nations will be stopped (Mic.4:2-4).

The Millennial Age of peace all but closes the natural history of planet Earth and sin. However, the story is not yet quite finished, for “When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea” (Re.20:7-8).

There is continuing discussion over the identity of Gog and Magog. In the context of the passage, they seem to equate to something like nations of the east and nations of the west. There is a passage in Ezekiel, however, where God says to the prophet, “Set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him” (Ezk.38:2). Gog, in this instance, is the name of a person of the land of Magog, who is ruler (“prince”) over the regions of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. Ezekiel says of him: “You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you...” (v.2). There are those who identify Rosh as Russia, with Mesheck and Tubal as tribes of people. Some have named the Persians, Ethiopians, Libyans, Syrians, and certain Hamitic people as being named in these statements. Events taking place today (2016) seem to indicate that this is a proper understanding. At any rate, we do know that they are to be ready to come against Israel and be destroyed, brought to punishment due to continued opposition to God’s chosen people.

Despite this huge show of force, the battle will be short-lived, for Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation all say that this last desperate attempt to destroy the people and the City of God will end in disaster for those who oppose God’s way; “I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed. I will rain down on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him: flooding rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone” (Ezk.38:22). Revelation concurs, saying that fire comes down from God and “...devoured them” (Re.20:9). It may be that the images of fire raining down are an ancient vision of modern weapons; others would say a supernatural intervention by God takes place; yet others that they refer to events in history. Still others would say they are symbolic of larger ideas and should not be interpreted literally.

Following the defeat of Gog, the last judgment begins with the devil that deceived them being “…cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Re.20:10). Satan will join the Antichrist and the False Prophet, who were condemned to the lake of fire at the beginning of the Millennium.

Following Satan’s consignment to the lake of fire, his followers come up for judgment. This is the “…second resurrection,” and all those who were not a part of the first resurrection at the coming of Christ now rise up for judgment. God sits on
His “Great White Throne” and all the dead, from the sea and hades are judged according to their works. “And Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Re.20:11, 13-15).

John had earlier written, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power” (Re.20:6). Those who are included in the Resurrection and the Rapture are excluded from the final judgment, and are not subject to the Second Death. Due to the description of the seat upon which the Lord sits, this final judgment is often referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment.

I. New Heavens and New Earth

In Isaiah, God promises a new heaven and earth, saying, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former will not be remembered nor come to mind” (Is.65:17). Correspondingly, Revelation shows us a vision in which John says, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Re.21:1).

The focus then turns to one City in particular, the New Jerusalem. Once again, we see the imagery of the marriage, for the City comes down from heaven and is “…prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Re.21:2). In the New Jerusalem, God will dwell with us, we will be His people and “…God himself will be with them and be their God” (Re.21:4). As a result, there is no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. Also, there is no need for the sun to give its light, “…for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light” (Re.21:22-23). The City will also be a place of great peace and joy, for God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death, sorrow, crying and pain will be no more, as there is a new Age and “…the former things have passed away” (Re.21:1-4).
Part V

Love

I. GOD’S STRONG ATTRIBUTE

Love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. Love is also a virtue representing all of human kindness, compassion, and affection - the unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another. Love may describe actions towards others or oneself based on compassion or affection.

In English, love refers to a variety of different feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from pleasure expressed as “I loved that meal” to interpersonal attraction, such as “I love my mate.” “Love” may refer specifically to the passionate desire and intimacy of romantic, sexual love- Gr. eros, to the emotional closeness of familial love, to the platonic love that defines friendship- Gr. philē, or to the profound oneness or devotion of God’s love- Gr. αγάπη, or to a concept of love that encompasses all of those feelings. This diversity of uses and meanings, combined with the complexity of the feelings that can be involved, makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, compared to other emotional states.

Love in its various forms acts as a major facilitator of interpersonal relationships and, owing to its central psychological importance, is one of the most common themes in the creative arts. Love may also be understood as part of the survival instinct, a function to keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species.

Although the nature or essence of love is a subject of frequent debate, different aspects of the word can be clarified by determining what cannot be called love. As a general expression of positive sentiment, a stronger form of like, love is commonly contrasted with hate or neutral apathy; as a less sexual and more emotionally intimate form of romantic attachment, love is commonly contrasted with lust; and as an interpersonal relationship with romantic overtones, love is sometimes contrasted with friendship, although the word love is often applied to close friendships.

When discussed in the abstract, love usually refers to interpersonal love, an experience felt by a person for another person. Love often involves caring for or identifying with a person or thing (cf. vulnerability and care theory of love), including love of oneself (cf. narcissism). In addition to cross-cultural differences in understanding love, ideas about love have also changed greatly over time. Some historians date modern conceptions of romantic love to courtly Europe during or after the Middle Ages, although the prior existence of romantic attachments is attested by ancient love poetry.

Because of the complex and abstract nature of love, a discourse on love is commonly reduced to a thought-terminating cliché, and there are a number of common proverbs regarding love, from Virgil’s “Love conquers all” to the Beatles’ (British Rock group of the late 60s-80s) “All You Need Is Love.” St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, defined love as “to will the good of another.” Bertrand Russell described love as a condition of
“absolute value,” as opposed to relative value. Philosopher Gottfried Leibniz said that love is “to be delighted by the happiness of another.” Love is sometimes referred to as being the “international language,” overriding cultural and linguistic divisions.

A person can be said to love an object, principle, or goal if they value it greatly and are deeply committed to it. Similarly, compassionate outreach and volunteer worker’s “love” of their cause may sometimes be born not of interpersonal love, but impersonal love coupled with altruism and strong spiritual or political convictions. People can also “love” material objects, animals, or activities if they invest themselves in bonding or otherwise identifying with those things. If sexual passion is also involved, this condition is called paraphilia.

Interpersonal love refers to love between human beings. It is a more potent sentiment than a simple liking for another. Unrequited love refers to those feelings of love that are not reciprocated. Interpersonal love is most closely associated with interpersonal relationships. Such love might exist between family members, friends, and couples.

Throughout history, philosophy and religion have done the most speculation on the phenomenon of love. In the last century, those in the field of psychology have written a great deal on the subject. In recent years, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, and biology have added to the understanding of the nature and function of love. For instance, it is believed that people with histrionic personality disorder and narcissism may have a limited or minimal capability for experiencing love.

The pastor who succeeds as a theologian will have to come to the understanding of God’s love, as opposed to the biological love (lust), or friendship (brotherly love), which often lead a person to selfish satisfaction of those drives in ways that are often not God-like.

A. Lust- Biological Love

Biological models of sex tend to view love as a mammalian drive, much like hunger or thirst. Helen Fisher, a leading expert in the topic of love, divides the experience of love into three partly overlapping stages: lust, attraction, and attachment. Lust is the feeling of sexual desire; romantic attraction determines what mates find attractive and pursue, conserving time and energy by choosing; and attachment involves sharing a home, parental duties, mutual defense, and in humans involves feelings of safety and security. Three distinct neural circuitries, including neurotransmitters, and also three behavioral patterns, are associated with these three romantic styles.

Lust is the initial passionate sexual desire that promotes mating, whether in or outside of marriage, and involves the increased release of chemicals such as testosterone and estrogen. These effects rarely last more than a few weeks or months, though this is not a required time frame. Attraction is the more individualized and romantic desire for a specific candidate for mating, which develops out of lust as commitment to an individual mate forms in a person. Recent studies in neuroscience have indicated that as people fall in love, the brain
consistently releases a certain set of chemicals, including pheromones, dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, which act in a manner similar to amphetamines, stimulating the brain's pleasure center and leading to side effects such as increased heart rate, loss of appetite and sleep, and an intense feeling of excitement. Research has indicated that this stage generally lasts from one and a half to three years, although as above, is not a required time.

Since the lust and attraction stages are both considered temporary, a third stage is needed to account for long-term relationships. Attachment is the bonding that promotes relationships lasting for many years and even decades. We could also call this attachment “true love”, as far as a human can experience it outside of Christ. Attachment is generally based on commitments such as marriage and children, or on mutual friendship based on things like shared interests. It has been linked to higher levels of the chemicals oxytocin and vasopressin to a greater degree than short-term relationships have. Enzo Emanuele and coworkers reported the protein molecule known as the nerve growth factor (NGF) has high levels when people first fall in love, but these return to previous levels after one year.

B. Psychologies View

Psychology depicts love as a cognitive and social phenomenon. Psychologist Robert Sternberg formulated a triangular theory of love and argued that love has three different components: intimacy, commitment, and passion. Intimacy is where two people share confidences and various details of their personal lives, and is usually shown in friendships and romantic love affairs. Commitment, on the other hand, is the expectation that the relationship is permanent. The last and most common form of love is sexual attraction and passion. Passionate love is shown in infatuation as well as romantic love. All forms of love are viewed as varying combinations of these three components. On the other side of this view is the fact that there are forms of love that are empty, as they do not include all three forms in varying combinations. For instance:

1. Non-love does not include any of these components;
2. “Liking” only includes intimacy;
3. Infatuated love only includes passion;
4. Empty love only includes commitment;
5. Romantic love includes both intimacy and passion;
6. Companionate love includes intimacy and commitment;
7. Fatuous love includes passion and commitment;
8. Consummate love includes all three.

American psychologist Zick Rubin sought to define love by psychometrics in the 1970s. His work states that three factors constitute love: attachment, caring, and intimacy.

C. Human Mating

Following developments in electrical theories such as Coulomb’s law, which showed that positive and negative charges attract, analogs in human life were developed, such as “opposites attract.” Over the last century, research on the nature of human mating has generally found this not to be true when it comes to character and personality; people tend to like people similar to self. However, in a few unusual and specific domains, such as immune systems, it seems that humans prefer others who are unlike themselves (e.g., with an orthogonal [pertaining to or involving right angles or perpendiculars] immune system), since this will lead to a baby that has the best of both worlds. In recent years, various human bonding theories have been developed, described in terms of attachments, ties, bonds, and affinities. Some Western authorities disaggregate into two main components, the altruistic and the narcissistic. This view is represented in the works of Scott Peck, whose work in the field of applied psychology explored the definitions of love and evil. Peck maintains that love is a combination of the “concern for the spiritual growth of another,” and simple narcissism. In combination, love is an activity, not simply a feeling.

Psychologist Erich Fromm maintained in his book *The Art of Loving* that love is not merely a feeling but is also action, and that in fact, the “feeling” of love is superficial in comparison to ones commitment to love via a series of loving actions over time. In this sense, Fromm held that love is ultimately not a feeling at all, but rather is a commitment to, and adherence to, loving actions towards another, one’s self, or many others, over a sustained duration. Fromm also described love as a conscious choice that in its early stages might originate as an involuntary feeling, but which then later no longer depends on those feelings, but rather depends only on conscious commitment. Of course, this “type” of love closely resembles what we see described in Scripture as a `agape love demonstrated by the Father and is to also be demonstrated in His children.

D. Evolutionary Psychologies View

Evolutionary psychology has attempted to provide various reasons for love as a survival tool. Humans are dependent on parental help for a large portion of their life spans comparative to other mammals. Love has therefore been seen as a mechanism to promote parental support of children for this extended time period. Another factor may be that sexually transmitted diseases can cause, among other effects, permanently reduced fertility, injury to the fetus, and increase complications
during childbirth. This would favor monogamous relationships over polygamy, which is supported in Scripture.

E. Biology’s View

The conventional view in biology is that there are two major drives in love: sexual attraction and attachment. Attachment between adults is presumed to work on the same principles that lead an infant to become attached to its mother. The traditional psychological view sees love as being a combination of companionate love and passionate love. Passionate love is intense longing, and is often accompanied by physiological arousal (shortness of breath, rapid heart rate, etc.); companionate love is affection and a feeling of intimacy not accompanied by physiological arousal.

F. Koine Greek

Greek distinguishes several different senses in which the word “love” is used. For example, the Greek language of the Bible has the words philia, eros, a`gape, storge, and xenia. However, with Greek as with many other languages, it has been historically difficult to separate the meanings of these words totally. At the same time, the Koine Greek text of the Bible has examples of the verb a`gapo having the same meaning as phileo.

1. A`gape;

A`gape (ἀγάπη) means love in modern-day Greek. The term s`agapo means “I love you” in Greek. The word a`gapo is the verb “I love.” It generally refers to a pure, ideal type of love, rather than the physical attraction suggested by eros. However, there are some examples of a`gape used to mean the same as eros. It has also been translated as “love of the soul.” We should understand here that God’s love to us is always a`gape.

In the New Testament, a`gapé is charitable, selfless, altruistic, and unconditional. It is parental love to the greatest degree, seen as creating goodness in the world. It is the way God is seen as loving humanity, and it is seen as the kind of love that Christians should aspire to and demonstrate toward one another.

2. `Eros;

`Eros (ἔρως érōs), from the Greek deity Eros, is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. The Greek word erota means “in love” and is where we get the idea of “erotic.” Although `eros is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it can become an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even appreciation of beauty itself. `Eros helps the soul recall knowledge of beauty and contributes to an understanding of spiritual truth.
Lovers and philosophers are all inspired to seek truth by `eros. Some translations list it as “love of the body.” This Greek word was not used in the New Testament.

As an expression of the opposite of `eros, Sacred Love Versus Profane Love (1602–03) by Giovanni Baglione, was intended as an attack on his hated enemy, the artist Caravaggio. It shows a boy, hinting at Caravaggio’s homosexuality, on one side, a devil with Caravaggio’s face on the other, and in between an angel representing pure, meaning non-erotic, love.

3. *Philia;*

*Philia* (φιλία philía), a dispassionate virtuous love, was a concept addressed and developed by Aristotle. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality, and familiarity. *Philia* is motivated by practical reasons; one or both of the parties benefit from the relationship. It can also mean “love of the mind.” This word is the root of what we understand as *philadelphia* or “fraternal affection,” and “love of the brethren” or “brotherly love.”

*Phileo* is also used in the New Testament and is a human response to something that is found to be delightful; also known as “brotherly love.”

4. *Storge;*

*Storge* (στοργή storgē) is natural affection, like that felt by parents for their offspring. This Greek word also was not used in the New Testament.

5. *Xenia;*

*Xenia* (ξενία xenía) has to do with hospitality and was an extremely important practice in ancient Greece. It was an almost ritualized friendship formed between a host and his guest, who could previously have been strangers. The host fed and provided quarters for the guest, who was expected to repay only with gratitude. That same practice was critical in the Jew’s thinking (Ge.18:2-8; 19:1-3; 1Ti.5:10).

G. **Love from God**

The Christian understanding is that a `gape love comes from God. The love of man and woman- `eros in Greek- and the unselfish love of others- a `gape, are often contrasted as “ascending” and “descending” love, respectively.

Christians believe that to “…love God with all your heart, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself” are the two most important things in life. This is the
The greatest commandment of the Jewish Torah, according to Jesus (Mk.12:28–34). Saint Augustine summarized this when he wrote “Love God, and do as thou wilt.”

The Apostle Paul glorified love as the most important virtue of all. Describing love in the famous poem in Corinthians, he wrote,

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres (1Co.13:4-7, NIV).

The Apostle John wrote,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (Jn.3:16-17, NIV).

John also wrote,

Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love (1Jn.4:7-8, NIV).

Saint Augustine says that one must be able to decipher the difference between love and lust. Lust, according to Saint Augustine, is an over indulgence, but to love and be loved is what he has sought for his entire life. He even said, “I was in love with love.” Finally, he did fall in love and was loved back, by God. Saint Augustine says the only One who can love us truly and fully is God, because love with a human only allows for flaws such as “jealousy, suspicion, fear, anger, and contention.” According to Saint Augustine, to love God is “to attain the peace which is yours.” (Saint Augustine’s Confessions)

Christian theologians see God as the source of love, which is mirrored in humans and their own loving relationships. Influential Christian theologian C.S. Lewis wrote a book called The Four Loves. Pope Benedict XVI wrote his first encyclical on God is love. He said that a human being, created in the image of God, Who is Love, is able to practice love; to give himself to God and others (a’gage) and by receiving and experiencing God’s love in contemplation (’eros). This life of love, according to him, is the life of the saints such as Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), and is the direction Christians take when they believe that God loves them.

In Christianity the practical definition of love is best summarized by St. Thomas Aquinas, who defined love as “to will the good of another,” or to desire for another to succeed. This is the explanation of the Christian need to love others, including
their enemies. As Thomas Aquinas explains, “Christian love is motivated by the need to see others succeed in life, to be good people.”

H. Judaism

In Hebrew, *Ahava* is the most commonly used term for both interpersonal love and love between God and God’s creations. *Chesed*, often translated as loving-kindness, is used to describe many forms of love between human beings.

The commandment to love other people is given in the Torah, which states, “Love your neighbor like yourself” (Le.19:18). The Torah’s commandment to love God “…with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might” (De.6:5), is taken by the Mishnah, a central text of the Jewish oral law, to refer to good deeds, willingness to sacrifice one’s life rather than commit certain serious transgressions, willingness to sacrifice all of one’s possessions, and being grateful to the Lord despite adversity (tractate Berachot 9:5).

Rabbinic literature differs as to how this love can be developed, e.g., by contemplating divine deeds or witnessing the marvels of nature. As for love between marital partners, this is deemed an essential ingredient to life: “See life with the wife you love” (Ec.9:9). The biblical book Song of Solomon is considered a romantically phrased metaphor of love between God and His people, but in its plain reading, reads like a love song. The 20th century Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler was frequently quoted as defining love from the Jewish point of view as “giving without expecting to take” (from his Michtav me-Eliyahu, Vol. 1).

I. Other Religion’s View of Love

We should note here, before bringing out words and thoughts of religions, that none of these contain the requirement of the sacrificial blood of a substitute Savior. We present them to show how “love” is seen in the various religions.

1. Islam;

Love encompasses the Islamic view of life as universal brotherhood that applies to all who hold faith. Amongst the 99 names the Qur’an has of God (Allah), there is the name Al-Wadud, or “the Loving One.” God is also referenced at the beginning of every chapter in the Qur’an as Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim, or the “Most Compassionate” and the “Most Merciful,” indicating that nobody is more loving, compassionate and benevolent than God. The Qur’an refers to God as being “full of loving kindness.”

The Qur’an exhorts Muslim believers to treat all people, those who have not persecuted them, with *birr* or “deep kindness” as stated in Surah. *Birr* is also used by the Qur’an in describing the love and kindness that children must show to their parents.
Ishq, or divine love, is the emphasis of Sufism in the Islamic tradition. Practitioners of Sufism believe that love is a projection of the essence of God to the universe. God desires to recognize beauty, and as if one looks at a mirror to see oneself, God "looks" at Himself within the dynamics of nature. Since everything is a reflection of God, the school of Sufism practices to see the beauty inside the apparently ugly. Sufism is often referred to as the religion of love. God in Sufism is referred to in three main terms, which are the "Lover, Loved, and Beloved," with the last of these terms being often seen in Sufi poetry. A common viewpoint of Sufism is that through love, humankind can get back to its inherent purity and grace. Some who practice Sufism are infamous for being “drunk” due to their love of God; hence, the constant reference to wine in Sufi poetry and music.

2. Buddhism;

In Buddhism, kāma is sensuous, sexual love. It is an obstacle on the path to enlightenment, since it is selfish. Karunā is compassion and mercy, which reduces the suffering of others. It is complementary to wisdom and is “necessary for enlightenment.” Adveṣa and mettā are benevolent love. That love is unconditional and requires considerable self-acceptance. This is quite different from ordinary love, which is usually about attachment and sex and which rarely occurs without self-interest. Instead, in Buddhism it refers to detachment and unselfish interest in another’s welfare.

The Bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism involves the complete renunciation of oneself in order to take on the burden of a suffering world. The strongest motivation one has in order to take the path of the Bodhisattva is the idea of salvation within unselfish, altruistic love for all sentient beings.

3. Hinduism;

In Hinduism, kāma is pleasurable, sexual love, personified by the god Kamadeva. For many Hindu schools, it is the third end (kama) in life. Kamadeva is often pictured holding a bow of sugar cane and an arrow of flowers; he may ride upon a great parrot. He is usually accompanied by his consort Rati and his companion Vasanta, “lord of the spring season.” Stone images of Kamadeva and Rati can be seen on the door of the Chennakeshava temple at Belur, in Karnataka, India. Maara is another name for kāma.

In contrast to kāma, prema or prem refers to elevated love. Karuna is compassion and mercy, which impels one to help reduce the suffering of others. Bhakti is a Sanskrit term, meaning “loving devotion to the supreme god.” A person who practices bhakti is called a bhakta. Hindu writers, theologians, and philosophers have distinguished nine forms of bhakti, which
can be found in the Bhagavata Purana and works by Tulsidas. The philosophical work Narada Bhakti Sutras, written by an unknown author, presumed to be Narada, distinguishes eleven forms of love.

In certain Vaishnava sects within Hinduism, attaining unadulterated, unconditional and incessant love for “god” is considered the foremost goal of life. Gaudiya Vaishnavas who worship Krishna as the Supreme Personality of god-head and the cause of all causes consider love for Prema to act in two ways: sambhoga and vipralambha (union and separation) — two opposites.

In the Bhakti tradition within Hinduism, it is believed that execution of devotional service to “god” leads to the development of love for “god” (taiche bhakti-phale krsne prema upajaya), and as love for “god” increases in the heart, the more one becomes free from material contamination (krishna-prema asvada haile, bhava nasa paya). Being perfectly in love with Krishna makes one perfectly free from material contamination, and this is the ultimate way of salvation or liberation, according to its adherents. In this tradition, salvation or liberation is considered inferior to love, and just an incidental by-product. Being absorbed in love for God is considered to be the perfection of life.

J. Free Love

The term “free love” has been used to describe a social movement that rejects marriage, which is seen as a form of social bondage. The Free Love movement’s initial goal was to separate the state from sexual matters such as marriage, birth control, and adultery. It claimed that such issues were the concern of the people involved, and no one else.

Much of the free-love tradition is an offshoot of anarchism, and reflects a civil libertarian philosophy that seeks freedom from state regulation and Church interference in personal relationships. According to this concept, the free unions of adults are legitimate relations which should be respected by all third parties whether they are emotional or sexual relations. In addition, some free-love writing has argued that both men and women have the right to sexual pleasure. In the Victorian era, this was a radical notion. Later, a new theme developed, linking free-love with radical social change, and depicting it as a harbinger of a new anti-authoritarian, anti-repressive sensibility. Of course, rebellion against God’s authority is at the root of this thinking.

Many people in the early 19th century believed that marriage was an important aspect of life to “fulfill earthly human happiness.” Middle-class Americans, influenced by Scripture and Awakenings of the 19th and early 20th centuries, wanted the home to be a place of stability in an uncertain world. This mentality created a
vision on strongly defined gender roles, which the free-love movement arose to oppose.

While the phrase free-love is often associated with promiscuity in the popular imagination, especially in reference to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, historically the free-love movement has not advocated multiple sexual partners or short-term sexual relationships. Rather, it has argued that love relations that are freely entered into should not be regulated by law.

The term “sex radical” is also used interchangeably with the term “free lover,” and was the preferred term by advocates because of the negative connotations of “free-love.” By whatever name, advocates had two strong beliefs: 1) opposition to the idea of forceful sexual activity in a relationship; 2) advocacy for a woman to use her body in any way that she pleases.

Laws of particular concern to free-love movements have included those that prevent an unmarried couple from living together, and those that regulate adultery and divorce, as well as age of consent, birth control, homosexuality, abortion, and sometimes prostitution, although not all free-love advocates agree on these issues. The abrogation of individual rights in marriage is also a concern. For example, some jurisdictions do not recognize spousal rape or treat it less seriously than non-spousal rape. Free-love movements since the 19th century have also defended the right to publicly discuss sexuality and have battled obscenity laws.

K. Philosophy on Love

Philosophy on love is the field of social philosophy and ethics which attempts to explain the nature of love. The philosophical investigation of love includes the tasks: 1) of distinguishing between the various kinds of personal love; 2) asking if and how love is/can be justified; 3) asking what the value of love is; 4) and what impact love has on the autonomy of both the lover and the beloved.

There are many different theories which attempt to explain what love is, and what function it serves. It would be very difficult to explain love to a hypothetical person who had not themselves experienced loving or being loved. In fact, to such a person love would appear to be quite strange if not outright irrational behavior. Among the prevailing types of theories that attempt to account for the existence of love there are: 1) psychological theories, the vast majority of which consider love to be very healthy behavior; 2) evolutionary theories, which hold that love is part of the process of natural selection; 3) spiritual theories which may, for instance consider love to be a gift from God; 4) various theories that consider love to be an unexplainable mystery, very much like a mystical experience.
L. Lust vs. Love

Intense sexual attraction is notorious for obliterating common sense and intuition in the most sensible people. Lust is "an altered state of consciousness programmed by the primal urge to procreate" (a psychologist's definition). Studies suggest that the brain in this phase is much like a brain on drugs. MRI scans illustrate that the same area lights up when an addict gets a fix of cocaine, a drug derived from the poppy plant, as when a person is experiencing the intense lust of physical attraction. Also in the early stage of a relationship, when the sex hormones are raging, lust is fueled by idealization and projection; that is, we see what we hope someone will be or need them to be, rather than seeing the real person, flaws and all.

Pure lust, sexual attraction, is based solely on physical attraction and fantasy, which often dissipates when the "real person" surfaces. It is the stage of wearing "rose colored glasses" where he or she "can do no wrong." Being in love does not exclude lust. In fact, lust can lead to love. However, real love, not based on idealization or projection, requires time to get to know each other. Here are some signs to watch for to differentiate pure lust from love.

1. Signs of lust:
   a. a person is totally focused on a person's looks and body;
   b. a person is interested in having sex, but not in having conversations;
   c. a person would rather keep the relationship on a fantasy level, not discussing real feelings;
   d. a person wants to leave soon after sex rather than cuddling or awaiting breakfast the next morning;
   e. the two are lovers, but not friends.

2. Signs of love:
   a. a person wants to spend quality time together in activities other than sex;
   b. a person gets lost in conversations and forgets about the hours passing;
   c. a person wants to honestly listen to the other's feelings, and to make the other person happy;
d. he or she motivates a person to be a better person;

e. a person wants to meet their family and friends.

M. Sexual Attraction

A challenge of sexual attraction is learning to stay centered and listen to the inner man in the early stages of being with someone. That is not easy in the midst of hormones surging, but it is essential to make healthy relationship decisions. Here are some tips to help a person keep their presence of mind when they are attracted to someone.

1. Negative gut feelings:

a. A little voice in our gut says “danger” or “beware;”

b. We have a sense of malaise, discomfort, or feeling drained after we are with that person;

c. Our attraction feels destructive or dark;

d. We are uncomfortable with how the other person is treating us, but we are afraid that if we mention it, we will push him or her away.

The inner man senses a potential for kindness and violence. Many women who have been in abusive relationships admitted, “My ‘gut’ initially told me something was wrong—but I ignored it.” The pattern was consistent, as they would meet someone that would be charming, sexy, and “sweep them off their feet.” They would write off what the inner person was saying to them, even though it might be something as strong as “you better watch out.” When later the abuse began, they were already hooked in the relationship.

Sometimes those gut instincts are anything but subtle. On a first date, one woman landed in the hospital with an IV, retching from “psychosomatic” abdominal pain. But that did not stop her from seeing the guy. From this and other situations, we can gain a real-world lesson: no matter how irresistibly attractive someone appears, close attention to the voice of the inner man will enable one to see beneath the exterior.

It is so much nicer to be involved with someone our “gut” likes, while our gut may also dislike a person (actually God warning us). Then we are not always guarding against a basic suspicion or incompatibility. We must also give self the permission to listen to our “gut” when it says, “This person is healthy for you. You are going to make each other happy.” To be happy, take a risk, but also pay attention to the warning signs presented. This allows a person to wisely go for the fulfilling
relationships they deserve. (Ed. Note: Please understand here that we are not advocating this avenue as the way for a Believer to find their mate. Also, we should understand that the "gut" feeling is Holy Spirit trying to warn the Believer to beware).

N. Bible Verses about Love

The Bible is full of great verses and passages about the topic of love. The pastor who functions as a theologian will see that God’s love for us is a perfect example and starting place to study on love. There are also great verses about love in relation to marriage, brotherly love or friendship, and loving our neighbor. Here is a collection of some of the greatest love quotes from the Bible.

1. Some “love of God” verses:

   For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (Jn.3:16).

   But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro.5:8).

   No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ro.8:37-39).

   I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Ga.2:20).

   See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him (1Jn.3:1).

2. Some “…love one another” Bible verses:

   Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law (Ro.13:8).

   For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Ga.5:13).

   With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love (Ep.4:2).
**O. Jesus Words about Love**

Jesus had strong words for us about love. He said that what had been taught previously by the Jews was incorrect, for they were to “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” This pointed out the plan of God in taking the Gospel to the whole world. Many times Israel had been persecuted, held in slavery, and generally looked at unfavorably with commensurate action toward them. But Jesus pointed out that by loving those who love us we have no reward, for even the hated tax collectors were doing the same. Further, the Gentiles would greet those of their own nationality, which was no different from the Jewish action. His formula for being different and right in the sight of God was, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt.5:43-48).

Jesus also pointed out that too often we are so worried about things that are not to be worried about. He said that we “…cannot serve God and money.” Our focus should be on life and relationships rather than on what we will eat or drink, or for what clothing we should wear (Mt.6:24-25).

The religious leadership of Israel was often disputing about what was important and what was not. One scribe, having heard how Jesus answered one of the Sadducees, wanted to know what the greatest commandment was. Jesus’ answer was that the most important commandment was, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mk.12:28-30). Most of the Jews who questioned Jesus were trying to trip Him up, but this question seems to have been one of the very few candid inquiries of Him for the purpose of obtaining information. Jesus answered it in the spirit of kindness, and commended the conduct of the man.

The statement, “Hear, O Israel!” was to call the attention of the Jews to the great importance of the truth about to be proclaimed (De.6:4-5). Other nations worshipped many gods, but the God of the Jews was One and only One, יהוה Yahweh. If Yahweh was the “only” God, then they ought not to love any other being supremely or bow down before any idol. They were to love God as intensely as God loved them. But not only was it to love God, but to love their fellow man also (v.31).
At another time, Jesus said that “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him” (Jn.14:21). His statement contains the idea:

1. That true love to Jesus will produce obedience (Jn.14:15);

2. That those who love Him will be loved of the Father, showing that there is a union between the Father and the Son;

3. That Jesus also will love them, evincing still the same union.

He was showing that trust in Him, shown by keeping of the commandments, was based in love. The love of one Holy Being or object is the love of all. The Kingdom of God is one and His people, though called by different names, are one. They are united to each other and to God, and the bond which unites the whole Kingdom in one is love. Because of that, all those who shall believe on Him through their word, or that of their successors would receive Him as Savior and get the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. Conversely, those who love Him not, or do not obey the testimonies of Christ, prove they do not love Him; and the Spirit of this truth has said, “He who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed” (1Co.16:22).

Another time Jesus was talking just to His disciples in the upper room when He said that His followers should “…abide in my love” and they could do so by keeping His commandments (Jn.15:9-10). His commandment, the special law of Christianity, is also called the “…new commandment” (Jn.13:34). It was with great love that He loved us and with the same tender affection, we should be willing to endure trials, to practice self-denials, and, if need be, we should lay down our lives for each other (1Jn.3:16). This commandment was so deeply engraved on the heart of John that St. Jerome said (lib. iii. c. 6, Com. ad Galat.), that in his extreme old age, when John used to be carried to the public assemblies of the believers, his constant saying was, “Little children, love one another.”

No man can carry his love for his friend farther than laying down his life for them. When we give up our life, we give up all that we have. Jesus would prove His great love for them, and us, just a few hours after this discourse by laying down His life. He would exemplify what He was preaching to them. Jesus’ last statement in this context was, “These things I command you, so that you will love one another” (Jn.15:17).

P. Love- for Marriage or Wedding

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can
floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised (Song 8:6-7).

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away (1Co.13:4-8).

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ep.4:2-3).

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind (Ph.2:2).

Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth (1Jn.3:18).

Q. Love Scriptures- from Proverbs or Psalms

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Ps.23:5-6).

Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love (Ps.31:16).

Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you (Ps.63:3).

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (Pr.10:12).

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity (Pr.17:17).

R. Notable Love Quotes from Believers

“The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.” (Mother Teresa)

“The way to love anything is to realize that it may be lost.” (G.K. Chesterton)

“God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.” (Max Lucado)
S. God's Love is Different from Man's Love

The key to understanding Paul's statement and the key to understanding the nature of the Christian journey is this: there is typically a huge difference between the love of God and the love of man. Understanding the difference shows us the way to our goal, namely our transformation from humanness to godliness. This is the Christian walk; this is Christianity. If we understand the difference between the love of God and the love of man, we will know where our journey begins, where our journey ends and the path in between. If we do not understand, we could think we have arrived at the finish line when we have not even left the starting blocks. If we allow Holy Spirit’s complete work in us, we will accomplish the journey whether we understand it or not; the Holy Spirit will do what the Holy Spirit does. But why should we hinder the process? If we understand what is happening, we can work with the process instead of ignorantly quenching it.

At its usual best, human love is still selfish while God is selfless. At the bottom of most human love is some sort of positive reinforcement. In his book entitled The Skilled Helper, Gerard Egan made a profound observation. During a discussion of reinforcement as a principle of human behavior, he stated the following:

“In a sense, reinforcement is the central principle of behavior....Beings that are not God by their very nature act in order to gain something when they act. There is no such thing as absolutely selfless behavior. People who are selfless find some kind of deep satisfaction in altruistic behavior even when altruism means suffering some kind of loss.”

There are innumerable selfish reasons for loving and doing well. We may love because we really love self or an extension of self. We might do good because it makes us feel better, because we: 1) believe “what goes around, comes around”; 2) to get “brownie points” with God; 3) to achieve salvation; 4) to receive blessings; 5) to escape curses or tribulation; 6) to get whatever it is that we think God is holding out to us as a reward. Perhaps it is because God's way works and we feel emotionally and spiritually healthier when we live a righteous life. Maybe we help others in pain because doing so helps alleviate the pain we experience when we see their pain. The reasons go on and on. We cannot judge anyone's motivation, but we do know that if we are strictly human, that motivation is not always, but usually selfish at its root. We say “almost always” because we were indeed created inherently good by God. “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Ge.1:31, RSV). However, our goodness has been severely weakened and subordinated to our desires.

We can look at it this way. Humans are a spirit, have a soul and live in a body. We have a body that is on loan to us; have a soul that is being trained; and yet we are a recreated spirit (2Co.5:17). Soul and body together, animated by the spirit, makes a complete human. Our body gives us inputs and makes us aware of our needs, such as the need to eat, sleep, or reproduce. Sometimes those needs and
desires are not physical but emotional and psychological, such as our need to be loved, to be safe, respected, and accepted.

Those inputs are neither evil nor good in themselves. They are merely inputs. The well-ordered soul takes those inputs and then makes a decision to act or not act upon them based upon the will to love at a human level. If accepting the input is love, it is accepted. If rejecting the input is love, it is rejected. The disordered soul is either overwhelmed by those inputs and thus accepts them despite its will, or makes a decision to act or not act upon them based upon the will to satisfy self.

This tendency to be overwhelmed by our biological, emotional, or psychological inputs or act upon them for selfish motives is what theology has traditionally labeled “the stain of original sin” or, more succinctly, “original sin.” Perhaps it is a poor choice of words for our culture in that it makes it seem like original sin is something we have done or at least something for which we have taken the blame. It is not something we have done; it describes the way we are. We were created inherently good but weakened by our selfishness due to the fall.

The soul weakened by original sin is held in slavery to selfishness, either choosing to satisfy self or being overwhelmed by self even when it wants to do otherwise. The soul in original justice, well-ordered as God is, is free from that slavery and free to love.

The contrast between love and self is essential. Indeed, there are really only two ends in life, love and self, and they are completely opposed. The opposite of love is not hate; it is self. Hate is just one manifestation of self, just like greed, lust or selfish good; however, it is perhaps the most despicable manifestation.

When we trace the cause of all of our actions, voluntary and involuntary, they always will end up in one of two camps; we either did it for self or we did it for love. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us will come to see that a very high percentage of what we do comes back to self, and that is being generous. Even the good and the love we think we express, if we reflect deeply enough on it, will display the ugly stain of self. From the subtle loving of our children but not some other person’s child (every terrorist, every criminal, everyone we despise is someone’s child), to the explicitly selfish good of “enlightened self-interest,” we reek of the slavery to self; to original sin.

Part of the problem is our confusion over the meaning of love. We "love" our children; we "love" our dog; we "love" chocolate ice cream, golf and the latest popular singer. Which of these, if any, is the same as the love God expects of us and offers to us as the end result of the Christian journey? What exactly is the difference between God’s love and human love? It is the difference between “business as usual” and the “new business plan.” That "plan" is:
1. Love God with all that is within us (Mk.12:30);

2. Love our enemies (Mt.5:44);


The reality is, when we come to the point of loving our enemies as Christ did, we are really then exhibiting love. Our enemy is not someone who said something about us, necessarily, but that person who has our worst situation as their goal. It is the person who desires to do us the most damage, even to kill us or at least cause it to be so. That is an enemy. When Jesus was pointing this out, He told us to

“…Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Lk.6:27-35).

Can we afford to do any less?
RESOURCE MATERIALS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED


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Webster's Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition, Cleveland and New


Electronic Resources:

http://bible.org/seriespage/goodness-god

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CHRISTIANS ARE CO-LABORERS

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

I Corinthians 3:5-11